This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 06822845 5

6

Portae

~~14~~ 2 -

THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.

VOL. II.—SERMONS.

THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.

LATE BISHOP OF LONDON:

WITH

HIS LIFE,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT HODGSON, A.M. F.R.S.

RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE'S HANOVER-SQUARE,
AND ONE OF THE CHAPLAINS IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

A NEW EDITION, IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. II.—SERMONS.

London:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND,

By Luke Hansard & Sons, near Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

1823.

SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

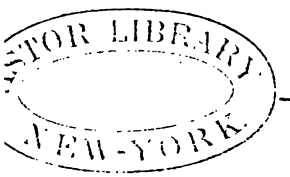
BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.

BISHOP OF LONDON.

THE SIXTEENTH EDITION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

1823.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

TO

THE KING.

SIR,

THE only grounds on which I can presume to entreat Your Majesty's favourable acceptance of this Volume of Sermons are, that a great part of them was preached in Your own Royal Chapel at St. James's; and that my intention in publishing them was to serve (as far as a situation of much labour and

little leisure would allow) the cause of that holy religion, to which Your Majesty has ever approved Yourself a sincere and cordial friend. An intention of this sort, however feebly executed, will, I am persuaded, be considered by Your Majesty as the best and most becoming return I can make for those spontaneous marks of Your goodness to me, which have impressed the warmest sentiments of gratitude on the mind of,

SIR,

YOUR MAJESTY'S

Most humble

and most dutiful

Subject, and Servant,

B. CHESTER.

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIRST VOLUME.

SERMON I. p. 1.

On the love of God.

Preached at St. James's Chapel, Feb. 10. 1774.

MARK xii. 30. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first great commandment.*

SERMON II. p. 23.

On the causes of unbelief.

Preached at St. James's Chapel, 1772.

JOHN iii. 19. *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

SERMON III. p. 47.

The possibility of resisting temptation asserted and proved.

Preached at St. James's Chapel, Feb. 11. 1770.

JAMES i. 13. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*

SERMON IV. p. 69.

The same subject continued, and the same text.

Preached at Lambeth, April 6. 1777.

SERMON V. VI. VII. pp. 91. 123. 147.

A summary view of the natural, moral, and scriptural evidences of a future life, and a future retribution.

Enlarged from three sermons, preached at Lambeth, 1774, 1775, and 1776.

MATT. XXV. 46. *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.*

SERMON VIII. p. 171.

On the advantages of an academical education.

Preached before the University of Cambridge, on Commencement-Sunday, July 5. 1767.

TITUS ii. 6. *Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.*

SERMON IX. p. 201.

A serious and devout observation of the Lord's Day enforced.

Preached at St. James's Chapel, March 18. 1781.

DEUT. v. 12. *Keep the sabbath-day, to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.*

SERMON X. p. 221.

The doctrine of Christ crucified no just cause of offence to unbelievers.

Preached at St. James's Chapel, March 24. 1782.

1 COR. i. 22, 23, 24. *The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*

SERMON XI. p. 247.

The necessity of national reformation.

Preached before the Lords spiritual and temporal, on the general fast, Feb. 10. 1779.

JEREMIAH xviii. part of 11th verse. *Thus saith the Lord; Behold I frame evil against you. Return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.*

SERMON XII. p. 269.

Christianity vindicated from the charge of cruelty.

MATT. x. 34. *Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

SERMON XIII. p. 297.

The pacific and benevolent temper of the Christian religion, proved from Scripture and from facts.

Preached at Lambeth Chapel, Dec. 23. 1764.

LUKE ii. 14. *On earth peace, good-will toward men.*

SERMON XIV. p. 325.

An immoderate love of diversions inconsistent with the duties of a Christian.

Preached at St. James's Chapel, Feb. 10. 1771.

2 TIM. iii. 4. *Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.*

SERMON XV. XVI. pp. 347. 373.

Universal obedience to the laws of Christ necessary to salvation.

Enlarged from one Sermon, preached at St. James's Chapel, Feb. 15. 1775.

JAMES ii. 10. *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

SERMON XVII. p. 391.

The civilization, improvement, and conversion of the Negro slaves in the British West-India islands recommended.

Preached before the incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, February 23. 1783.

LUKE iv. 17, 18, 19, 20. *And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias.*

And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

SERMON XVIII. p. 429.

On the nature and the characteristic marks of a Christian friendship.

Preached at St. James's Chapel, March 16. 1777.

JOHN xiii. 23. *Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

ADVERTISEMENT

TO

THE FIRST EDITION.

Of the following Sermons, the second, eighth, eleventh, a part of the thirteenth, and the whole of the fourteenth, have been published before, and are here reprinted, with considerable alterations and corrections. The rest are now for the first time offered to the Public.

SERMON I.

Mark xii. 30.

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH: THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

THE LOVE OF GOD, so forcibly inculcated in this and other passages of Scripture, is a sentiment purely evangelical; and is one of those many peculiar circumstances which so eminently distinguish the doctrines of the Gospel from the dry unanimated precepts of the ancient heathen moralists. We never hear *them* urging the love of God, as a necessary part of human duty, or as a proper ground of moral obligation. Their religion being merely ceremonial and political, never pretended to reach the heart, or

to inspire it with any sincerity or warmth of affection towards the Deity. Indeed how was it possible to have any love for such gods as they worshipped: for gods debased with every human weakness, and polluted with every human vice? It was enough, surely, to make the people worship such a crew. To have insisted upon their loving them too, would have exceeded all bounds of modesty and common sense. But Christianity having given us an infinitely great and good and holy God to worship, very naturally requires from us the purest and devoutest sentiments of affection towards him; and with great justice makes the love of our Maker an indispensable requisite in religion, and the grand fundamental duty of a Christian. Surely then it concerns us to enquire carefully into the true nature of it. And it concerns us the more, because it has been unhappily brought into disrepute by the extravagant conceits of a few devout enthusiasts concerning it. Of these, some have treated the love of God in so mystical and refined a way, and carried it to such heights of seraphic ecstacy and rapture, that common minds

must for ever despair either of following or understanding them; whilst others have described it in such warm and indelicate terms, as are much better suited to the grossness of earthly passion, than the purity of spiritual affection. And what is still more deplorable, the love of God has been sometimes made the scourge of man; and it has been thought that the most effectual way to please the Creator, was to persecute and torment and destroy his creatures. Hence the irreligious and profane have taken occasion to treat all pretence to piety as fanatical or insincere; and even many of the worthier part of mankind have been afraid of giving way to the least warmth of devout affection towards the great Author of their being. But let not the sincere Christian be scared out of his duty by such vain terrors as these. The accidental excesses of this holy sentiment can be no just argument against its general excellence and utility. As the finest intellects are most easily disordered and overset; so the more generous and exalted our affections are, the more liable are they to be perverted and depraved. We know that even friendship

itself has sometimes been abused to the most unworthy purposes, and led men to the commission of the most atrocious crimes. Shall we therefore utterly discard that generous passion, and consider it as nothing more than the unnatural fervour of a romantic imagination! Every heart revolts against so wild a thought. And why then must we suffer the love of God to be banished out of the world, because it has been sometimes improperly represented, or indiscreetly exercised? It is not either from the visionary mystic, the sensual fanatic, or the frantic zealot, but from the plain word of God, that we are to take our ideas of this divine sentiment. There we find it described in all its native purity and simplicity. The marks by which it is there distinguished, contain nothing enthusiastic or extravagant. The chief test by which the Gospel orders us to try and measure our love to God is, *the regard we pay to his commands.* "He that hath my commandments, "and keepeth them," says our Lord, "he "it is that loveth me." * "This is the love "of God," says St. John, "that we keep his

* John xiv. 21.

"commandments." * And again, in still stronger terms: "Whoso keepeth God's "word, in him verily is the love of God "*perfected*." † Had a proper attention been paid to such passages as these, we should have heard nothing of those absurd reveries which have so much disgraced this doctrine. Yet, while we thus guard against the errors of over-strained pietism, let us take care that we fall not into the opposite extreme of a cold and cautious indifference; that, as others have raised their notions of this excellent quality too high, we, on the other hand, sink them not too low. Because the Scriptures say, that to keep the commandments of God, is to love God, therefore too many are willing to conclude that no degree of inward affection need accompany our outward obedience; and that all appearance of devout ardour is a suspicious and even dangerous symptom. But this notion is to the full as groundless and unscriptural as those above mentioned; and needs no other confutation than the very words of the text. We are commanded not

* 1 John v. 3. † 1 John ii. 5.

merely to *love* God, but to love him *with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.* Since then our *obedience* must be, as we have seen, the measure of our *love*, we are plainly bound by this command to *obey* him also with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength; that is, with zeal, with alacrity, with vigour, with perseverance, with the united force of all our faculties and powers, with one universal bent of the whole man towards God. The love of our Maker, then, is neither a mere unmeaning animal fervour, nor a lifeless formal worship or obedience. It consists in devoutness of heart, as well as purity of life; and, from a comparison of the text with other passages of Scripture, we may define it to be, "such a reverential admiration of God's perfections in general, and such a grateful sense of his infinite goodness in particular, as render the contemplation and the worship of him delightful to us; and produce in us a constant desire and endeavour to please him in every part of our moral and religious conduct."

This it is that the Scriptures mean by the love of God; and it is nothing more than

what every man may, if he pleases, very easily acquire. It is not a new perception, of which we never experienced any thing before; it is not an unintelligible, mysterious, or supernatural impression upon the soul; it is only a purer degree of that very same affection, which we frequently entertain for some of the most worthy of our own species. This sentiment religion finds already existing in our minds, and all that it does is to give it a new direction, and to turn it upon God, as its highest and properest and most adequate object. If then we wish to know still more clearly in what the love of God consists; and what share of it we ourselves possess; we must consult our own breasts, and consider a little how we feel ourselves affected towards the eminently great and good among our fellow-creatures. Now, when we observe any one of this character going on steadily and uniformly in one regular even course of upright, noble, disinterested, benevolent conduct, making it the chief study and business of his life to promote the comfort and happiness of every human being within his reach; we can no more

help esteeming and loving and reverencing so excellent a person, than we can forbear desiring food when we are hungry; even though we ourselves are not in the least benefited by his goodness. But, should we be so fortunate as to live under his influence, and to be *interested* in his virtues; to have him for our friend, our benefactor; our parent, guardian, governor, or protector; then it is scarce possible for language to express the emotions of affection, gratitude, and delight which we feel in contemplating his goodness, and even in the very mention of his name. In cases like this (and such cases do, God be thanked, sometimes exist) how does our heart *burn within us*, how restless and impatient are we, till we find some better way than that of words to express the sense we have of our benefactor's kindness towards us? With what solicitude do we study every turn of his countenance, and endeavour to prevent his very wishes? We not only do what he desires, but we do it with alacrity and ardour. We love to speak of him, to think of him, to converse with him, to imitate him. We never mention

him but in terms of reverence and respect. We are jealous of his reputation; we cannot bear to hear it lightly treated. We enter heartily into his interests, and adopt his sentiments. We love what he loves, we hate what he hates, we are ready for his sake to do any thing, to relinquish any thing, to suffer any thing. These are the sentiments we entertain, and this the conduct we observe towards those that we love on earth; and in this manner does Christianity expect us to love our Father that is in heaven. If this sincerity and ardour of affection are justly esteemed both natural and laudable in the one case, why are they not at least equally so in the other? Why may they not without any stretch of our faculties, or any imputation of hypocrisy or enthusiasm, be exercised towards Him, who is the very perfection of every thing that is great and good; who is in reality, and in the strictest sense, our friend and benefactor, our parent, guardian, protector, and governor, all in one? It is true, indeed, there is one difference, and that, as some think, a very material one, between the two cases. Our earthly friends

are *seen*, our heavenly one is *unseen*. But who will pretend to say that we can have no love for those whom we have never seen? Do we not often conceive the highest regard and veneration for the worthies of past ages, whom we know only by the portraits that history draws of them? And even with respect to persons of distinguished excellence in our own times: it is not always necessary that we should see in order to love them. It is enough that we feel that they are present with us, by that most pleasing and convincing of all proofs, the benefits they confer upon us. Now we know that God is every where present; that, "he is not far from "every one of us;" that in him we most literally "live, and move, and have our being." Though we see not *him*, yet his kindness and bounty to us we see and feel every moment of our lives; and the invisibility of the Giver is amply compensated by the inestimable value of his gifts. By Him we were first brought into being; by his power that being is continually upheld; by his mercy in Christ Jesus we are redeemed from sin and misery; by his grace we are excited to every thing that

is good; by his providence we are hourly protected from a multitude of unseen dangers and calamities; to his bounty we owe the various comforts and delights that surround us here, and the provision that is made for our everlasting happiness hereafter. Is it possible now to receive such favours as these, without sometimes thinking of them; or to think of them without being filled with love and gratitude towards the gracious Author of them? If they affect us at all, they must affect us strongly and powerfully. For, although the love of God is not a sudden start of passion: but a sober, rational, religious sentiment, acquired by reflection, and improved by habit; yet, as I before observed, it must not be so *very* rational as to exclude *all* affection; it may, and it ought to produce in us a steady and uniform, a sedate yet fervent sense of gratitude towards God; exerting itself in acts of adoration and praise, and substantialized in the practice of every Christian virtue.

Have you then (ask your own hearts) have you ever given these practical, these only decisive proofs, that you really love

God, as the text requires you to do, with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? Have you made his precepts the first and principal object of your care, and pursued other things only in subordination to that great concern? Have you not only admired and adored his perfections, but, as far as the infirmity of your nature, and the infinite distance between God and man would allow, endeavoured to imitate them? Have you delighted to think and to speak of him, and never thought or spoke of him, but with the utmost veneration and awe? When you have heard his holy name profaned, or seen any of his ordinances or laws insulted, have you always felt and expressed a proper abhorrence of such unworthy behaviour? Have you sacredly observed that holy day which is set apart for his service, and not only attended public worship yourselves, but taken care that all under your roof and under your protection should do the same? Have you brought up your children "in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord*;" and amidst all the fine accomplishments, amidst

* Eph. vi. 4.

all the prudent maxims with which you have furnished them, have you taught them that "wisdom which is from above," and formed them to shine in *another* world as well as this? Have you gladly seized all opportunities of conversing with your Maker in private and in domestic prayer; of pouring out your soul before him on all occasions, whether of sorrow or of joy, entreating pardon for your offences, and imploring his assistance for your future conduct? Have you for his sake been content sometimes not only to forego many worldly comforts and advantages, but even, if necessary, to encounter ridicule, reproach, and injurious treatment? Have you cheerfully sacrificed to his service, when called upon, your health and your repose, your amusements and pursuits, your favourite passions and your fondest wishes, the pleasures of youth, the ambition of manhood, the avarice of old age? Have you borne with patience and resignation all the disappointments, losses, and afflictions, that have befallen you? Have you considered them as the corrections of his fatherly hand, and submitted without a murmur to all the

dispensations of his providence? Have you, in fine, entirely subdued all anxious and fretful thoughts about your temporal affairs, and acquired that absolute composure and serenity of mind in every condition of life, which nothing but religion can give, and nothing but guilt can take away; committing yourselves and all your concerns to the great Disposer of every human event; with a perfect confidence in his infinite wisdom and goodness, and a firm persuasion that every thing will work together ultimately for your good?

By questions such as these it is that you must try and examine yourselves whether you really love God or not. In all this there is nothing visionary or fanatical, nothing but what the coolest heads and the calmest spirits may easily rise to, nothing but what reason approves and the Gospel enjoins, nothing but what we ourselves should in a proportionable degree require from those who pretended to have a sincere regard and affection for us. What answers you can give to these questions, your own consciences can best tell. But what a very great part of

mankind can say to them, one may but too well imagine. Some there are, who, far from having any love for God, affect to doubt his very existence, and professedly make a jest of every thing that looks like religion. Others, immersed in the pursuits of pleasure, of interest, of ambition, have no time to waste upon their Maker, and hardly know whether they believe a God or not. And even of those who profess both to believe and to reverence him, how few are there that know any thing of that inward and hearty love for him which leads to universal holiness of life? If they maintain an external *decency* of conduct, are just in their dealings, and generous to their friends, they think that all is well, and that they are in the high road to salvation. All their notions of duty terminate in *themselves*, or their *fellow-creatures*, and they seem to have no apprehensions of any peculiar homage or service being due to their *Creator*. They can therefore, without any remorse of conscience, make a wanton and irreverent use of his holy name, in oaths and execrations, which can answer no other purpose but that of insulting God, and

giving pain to every serious mind. Not content with the ample provision of six days out of seven for their business and amusement, they must have the seventh too, or they are undone. They grudge their Maker even that slender pittance of time which he has reserved to himself; they prostitute the whole, or the greater part of it, to the most trifling or most unworthy purposes; and think it much fitter that he should be robbed of his worship than they of their pleasures and pursuits for a day, or even for an hour. Much less can they afford to spend a few minutes every day in *private* meditation and prayer; and as to *family-devotion*, it would, they think, absolutely ruin their character, and expose them to everlasting contempt. Or if by chance they do go so far as to worship God both in public and at home, yet with what visible languor, and coldness, and indifference, do they often labour through this heavy task; and how apt are they to deride and stigmatize with opprobrious names those who show any unusual marks of seriousness and devotion? They think it a dreadful crime to be *righteous over-much*, but

none at all to be righteous over-little. They are terribly afraid of being called bigots and enthusiasts; but think there is no danger of falling into the opposite extreme, of lukewarmness and want of piety. They profess perhaps, sometimes, and perhaps, too, persuade themselves, that they really love God; but they give no demonstrative proof that their persuasion is well-grounded, and their profession sincere. If they have the *form* of godliness, they too commonly want the *power* of it. Their piety is in general exterior and local, confined to the ordinary offices of devotion, and the walls of a church; not considering that God is equally present every where; that the whole world is his temple, and the sanctity of our whole lives his worship. But *their* lives are consecrated to far other purposes. Their affections are not set on things above, their views do not tend there, their hopes are not centered there, "their treasure is on earth, and there is their "heart also." The main end, the great and ultimate aim, of all their actions and designs, is not to please GOD, but to please *themselves;* to advance their power, to en-

large their fortunes, to multiply their amusements. Their love of God is only secondary, and subservient to these primary considerations; just as much as is *commodious* and *easy*, and consistent with all their favourite pursuits. Satisfied with "eschewing evil," they do not go on "to do the thing that is good;" they do not press forwards toward those sublime and exalted virtues, that preference of God to every worldly consideration, that entire resignation to the Divine will, that perfect trust and reliance upon Heaven, which are the surest proof, and the fairest fruit, of true genuine piety. In prosperity, their hearts are lifted up, and they forget God; in adversity, they are cast down, and dare not look up to him. Or if, when misfortunes press hard upon them, they are at length brought down upon their knees before him; yet this is commonly an act of fear rather than of love, of necessity rather than of choice; after experiencing what every human being will experience in his turn, the instability of wordly happiness, and the weakness of every earthly support.

What then can be said for those who fall under this description, and what excuse can they make for the neglect of so important a duty? For, whatever they may think of it, however lightly in the gayety of their hearts they may treat the love of their Maker, yet it is confessedly the FIRST, AND GREAT COMMAND, and stands at the head of every Christian virtue. If you ask, *why* it is thus distinguished, the answer is obvious. It is plainly reasonable and right; it is conformable to all our ideas of order and propriety, that the Supreme Lord of All, the *first* and greatest and best of Beings, should have the *first* place in our regards, and that those duties which respect him as their immediate object, should have the precedent and command over every other. But besides this natural fitness, there is another very important reason why the love of God is called in the Gospel the FIRST AND GREAT COMMAND. And that is, because among all the incentives to virtue, it is the only one whose operation is sufficiently effectual and extensive, the only one that can reach to every instance of duty, and produce an uni-

form, consistent character of goodness. It is *the grand leading principle of right conduct*, the original source and fountain from which all Christian graces flow; from whence the "living waters" of religion take their rise, and branch out into all the various duties of human life. Other motives may *frequently* lead us to what is right. Instinct, constitution, prudence, convenience, a strong sense of honour and of moral rectitude, will in *many* cases prompt us to worthy actions; but in *all* cases they will not, especially in those of great danger and difficulty, and self-denial; whereas the love of God, if it be hearty and sincere, will equally regulate the *whole* of our conduct; will, on the most delicate and trying occasions, engage us to renounce our dearest interests and strongest inclinations, when conscience and duty require it at our hands. A man without any religion at all may do good *occasionally*, may act laudably *by chance;* his virtue may break out sometimes in sudden temporary gleams; but whoever wishes to be habitually and uniformly good, must have the vital principle of piety working at his heart, and by a con-

stant regular warmth producing constant and regular fruits of righteousness.

Let not then either the sober moralist, or the gay man of the world, any longer treat this most holy affection with derision and contempt, as a mere ideal unintelligible notion, fit only for the cloistered monk, or the superstitious devotee. It is, on the contrary, one of the most useful, one of the most practical sentiments belonging to our nature, adapted no less to active than to contemplative life, and entirely calculated to promote all the great purposes of social happiness and universal good. This is not a time, God knows, for weakening any of those ties, which bind men down to their duty, much less for dissolving that strongest of all bonds, affectionate allegiance to the great Sovereign of the universe; which, as the Scripture expresses it, *constrains* us to every thing that is right and good, from this powerful, this irresistible motive; because the Author of our being, the Author of every blessing we enjoy, demands it from us, as a proof of our gratitude, as the best, the only return we can make to his un-

bounded goodness. Without this, every system of ethics, however specious or plausible it may seem in theory, will be found on trial imperfect and ineffectual. And it is one of the many invaluable benefits we owe to the Gospel, that by the addition of this *governing principle, this master affection*, to all the other grounds of moral obligation, it has given virtue every assistance that heaven and earth can furnish; it has given us the completest and most efficacious rule of conduct that was ever offered to mankind.

SERMON II.

JOHN iii. 19.

THIS IS THE CONDEMNATION, THAT LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT, BECAUSE THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL.

WHEN the several parts of the text are reduced to their proper order, they give us the four following distinct Propositions: —

That Light is come into the world:

That men have preferred darkness *to* this Light:

That the reason is, because their deeds are evil:

And that the consequence of this choice will be condemnation.

It may be worth our while to bestow a little consideration on each of these particulars.

In this enlightened age, it will be thought no paradox to assert that "light is come into the world." The position is true in more senses than one; but there is only one that can suit this passage. The light here meant can be no other than that divine one of revelation, which "brought life and immortality *" along with it. The Christian dispensation is constantly and uniformly described in holy writ under this figure, from the time that the first faint glimmerings of it appeared at a distance, till it shone forth in its full lustre and glory under the Gospel. Indeed there seems to be scarce any other image, that could so fitly and adequately represent it to us. It is of the same use to the spiritual that the light of the sun is to the natural world. It gives life, health, and vigour, to God's new creation; it makes the "day of salvation †" to dawn upon us; it opens to us

* 2 Tim. i. 10. † 2 Cor. vi. 2.

the prospect of another and better life; "it "is a light to our feet and a lantern to our "paths *," and guides us in the way to happiness and glory.

The next assertion contained in the text, that "men have preferred darkness to this "light," may seem to require a proof. To "love darkness rather than light" is so opposite to our nature, so inconsistent with our general manner of proceeding, that it seems at first incredible. If it really is the case, so perverse a choice was never made but in religion. Every other kind of light men catch at with the utmost eagerness. The light of the heavens has been ever esteemed one of the greatest blessings that Providence has bestowed upon us, without which, even life itself would be hardly thought worth possessing. The love of knowledge, that light of the mind, appears in us as early, and operates in us as strongly, as any one principle in our nature; and, in every instance, the human understanding naturally lays hold on every opportunity of inform-

* Psal. cxix. 105.

ation, and opens itself one very side to let in all the light it is capable of receiving.

How then comes it to pass that with a mind thus constituted, thus thirsting after light, men can sometimes bring themselves to do such violence to their nature, as to choose darkness, in that very point where it is of the utmost importance to have all the light they can possibly get; where every step must lead to happiness or misery, and every error draw after it the most fatal and lasting consequences? Yet our Saviour tells us, that this was actually the case in his days; and would to God that daily experience did not show the possibility of it in our own! But when we see the various artifices with which revelation is every day assailed; when we see one man* most ingeniously reasoning us out of every ground of certainty, and every

* HUME; whose uncomfortable and unintelligible system of Pyrrhonism has been exposed with great spirit and eloquence in DR. BEATTIE'S *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth:* in which (as well as in all the other productions of the same excellent writer) the reader will find that union so rarely to be met with, of a clear head, a fine imagination, a correct taste, and a heart thoroughly warmed with the love of truth and virtue.

criterion of truth; involving self-evident axioms in obscurity and confusion; and entangling our understandings in the gloomy intricacies of scholastic subtilty and metaphysical abstraction: when we see another* exhausting all the powers of a most fertile genius in ridiculing the dispensations of the God that gave it; making the most awful subjects of religion the constant sport of his licentious wit; and continuing to sit with unabated levity in "the seat of the scorner," till he drops from it into the grave: when we see a third†, with the strongest professions of sincerity and good faith, proposing most humbly what he calls his *doubts* and *scruples*, and thereby creating them in the minds of others; extolling one part of Christianity in order to subvert the rest; retaining its moral precepts, but rejecting its miracles and all its characteristic doctrines; giving an air of speciousness to the wildest singularities by the most exquisite graces of composition, and insidiously undermining the foundations of the Gospel, while he pretends to

* VOLTAIRE. † ROUSSEAU.

defend it: when, I say, our adversaries assume such different shapes, and set so many engines at work against us; what else can this mean but to take from us all the sources of religious information, and bring us back again to the darkness and ignorance of our Pagan ancestors? It is to no purpose to tell us here of the *light of nature.* It is an affront to our senses, to offer us that dim taper, in the room of the "sun of righte-"ousness."* Whatever may be said (and a great deal has been said) of the modern improvements of science, the discoveries of philosophy, and the sagacity of human reason, it is to revelation only we are indebted for the superior light we now boast of in religion.† If nature could ever have pointed out to us right principles of belief, and rules of conduct, she might have done it long ago; she had four thousand years to do it in before the coming of Christ. But what little progress was made in this vast space of

* Mal. iv. 2.

† M. Rousseau himself confesses, that all the fine morality displayed in some of our modern publications, is derived not from philosophy, but from the Gospel. Vol. ix. p. 71.

time; what egregious mistakes were committed, not only in the speculative doctrines of religion, but in some of the most essential points of practical morality, I need not remind you. How comes it then to pass, that this blind guide is at last become so quick-sighted? How comes her eye on a sudden so strong and clear, as to see into the perfections and will of God, to penetrate into the dark regions of futurity, to take in at one view the whole compass of our duty, and the whole extent of our existence? It is plain some friendly hand must have removed the film from her eyes; and what other hand could this be than that gracious and beneficent one, which gave eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; which helped the impotence, and healed the infirmity, of nature, in every instance, in none more than in this? It is in short from the sacred sources of the Gospel, that reason drew that light she now enjoys. Let then men walk, if they *will* be so perverse, "BY THIS LESSER LIGHT*," which was only intended "to rule the "night†" of heathenism; but let them be

* Gen. i. 16. † Ib.

so honest as to confess that it is only a *borrowed*, a *reflected* light; that it owes much the greatest part of its present lustre TO THAT GREATER, THAT BETTER LIGHT of the Gospel, whose province it is "to govern the day*;" and "to lighten every man that cometh into the world." †

Let us however suppose for a moment (what can never be proved) that mankind are now much better able to investigate truth, and to find out their duty by themselves, than they were in former ages; and that reason can give us (the utmost it ever did or can pretend to give) a perfect system of morality. But what will this avail us, unless it could be shown that a *man* is also perfect and uncorrupt? A religion that contained nothing more than a perfect system of morality might perhaps suit an angel: but it is only one part, it is only a subordinate part, of the religion of a man and a sinner. It would be but very poor consolation to a criminal going to execution, to put into his hands a complete collection of the laws of his country, when the poor wretch perhaps

* Gen. i. 16. † John i. 9.

expected a reprieve. It could serve no other purpose than to embitter his agonies, and make him see more clearly the justice of his condemnation. If you chose to do the unhappy man a real service, and to give him any substantial comfort, you must assure him that the offence for which he was going to die was forgiven him; that his sentence was reversed; that he would not only be restored to his prince's favour, but put into a way of preserving it for the future; and that if his conduct afterwards was honest and upright, he should be deemed capable of enjoying the highest honours in his master's kingdom. But no one *could* tell him this, or at least he would credit no one that did; except he was commissioned and authorized by the prince himself, to tell him so. He might study the laws in his hands till the very moment of his execution, without ever finding out from them that he should obtain a pardon.

Such, the Scriptures inform us, was the state of man before Christ came into the world. He had fallen from his original innocence. He was a rebel against God, and

obnoxious to his wrath. The sentence of death had passed upon him, and he had no plea to offer to arrest the execution of it. Reason, you say, gives him a perfect rule to walk by. But he has already transgressed this rule; and if even this transgression were cancelled, yet if left to himself, he may transgress it again the next moment. He is uneasy under his sentence, he wants forgiveness for the past, assistance for the future; and till you can give him this, it is an insult upon his misery to talk to him of a perfect rule of action. If this be all that reason can give him (and it is really much more than it can give him) he must necessarily have recourse to Revelation. God only knows, and God only can tell, whether he *will* forgive, and upon what *terms* he will forgive, the offences done against him; what mode of worship he requires; what helps he will afford us; and what condition he will place us in hereafter. All this God actually *has* told us in the Gospel. It was to tell us this, he sent his Son into the world, whose mission was confirmed by the highest authority, by signs from heaven, and miracles on earth; whose life and doctrine

are delivered down to us by the most unexceptionable witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood: who were too curious and incredulous to be themselves imposed upon, too honest and sincere, too plain and artless, to impose upon others.

What then can be the reason that men still refuse to see, and persist in "loving darkness "rather than light?" They will tell you, perhaps, that it is because the Gospel is full of incredible mysteries; but our Saviour tells you, and he tells you much truer, that it is "because their deeds are evil." The mysteries and difficulties of the Gospel can be no real objection to any man that considers what mysteries occur, and what insuperable objections may be started, in almost every branch of human knowledge; and how often we are obliged in our most important temporal concerns to decide and to act upon evidence, encumbered with far greater difficulties than any that are to be found in Scripture. If we can admit no religion that is not free from mystery, we must, I doubt, be content without any religion at all. Even the religion of nature itself, the whole constitution both of the natural and

the moral world, is full of mystery*; and the greatest mystery of all would be, if, with so many irresistible marks of truth, Christianity should at last prove false. It is not then because the Gospel has *too little* light for these men that they reject it, but because it has *too much*. "For every one that doeth evil "hateth the light, neither cometh to the "light, lest his deeds should be reproved."† The light of the Gospel is too prying and inquisitive for such an one. It reveals certain things which he could wish to conceal from all the world, and if possible from himself. Nor is this all; it not only reveals, but it reproves them. It strikes him with an evidence he cannot bear; an evidence not only of its own truth, but of his unworthy conduct. The Gospel does indeed offend him; but it is not his understanding, it is his conscience, that is shocked; he could easily credit what it requires him to believe; but he cannot, or rather he will not, practise what it commands him to do.

* Vide *Voltaire, Questions sur l'Encyclopedie*, v. i. p. 190. *Rousseau, t.* 7. *p.* 176. *& t.* 8. *pp.* 17. 26. 32. 49.—12°, 1762. *Francfort.*

† John iii. 20.

It is plain that such a man cannot possibly admit a Revelation that condemns him; and it is *as* plain that the man of virtue cannot spurn the hand that is graciously stretched out to reward him. If he is a *truly* virtuous man, that is, one who sincerely labours to know his duty, and sincerely intends to perform it, he cannot but wish for more light to guide him in the investigation, more assistance to support him in the discharge of it, more happiness to crown his perseverance in it, than bare reason alone can afford him. This is what all the best and wisest Heathens most ardently desired, what nature has been continually looking out for with the utmost earnestness of expectation. When with a mind thus disposed he sits down to examine the Gospel, suggest to me the least shadow of a reason why he should reject it. He finds in it a religion, pure, holy, and benevolent, as the God that gave it. He finds not only its moral precepts, but even its sublimest mysteries, calculated to promote internal sanctity, vital piety, unbounded philanthropy. He finds it throughout so great and noble, so congenial to the finest feelings, and most generous

sentiments of his soul; that he cannot but *wish* it may be true; and never yet, I believe, did any good man wish it to be true, but he actually found it so. He sees in it every expectation of nature answered, every infirmity supported, every want supplied, every terror dissipated, every hope confirmed; nay, he sees that God has done exceeding abundantly above all that he could either ask or think; that he has given him (what reason could hardly have the idea of) *eternal happiness in a life to come.* Will this man "love darkness "rather than that light?" Will he choose to pursue virtue, with much pains, little success, and no other *wages* than *death;* or to be led to her through a safe and easy path by an infallible guide, who does not desire him to "serve God for nought?"

Let me not however be understood to assert, or to represent the text as asserting, that *all* unbelievers are without exception absolutely wicked men. There are some, no doubt, who lead, what is called, good moral lives. Yet, if you examine even these very strictly, you will, I believe, seldom find that their virtue is so pure, so uniform, so extensive,

so complete in all the several branches of duty, as that of a truly devout Christian. And it should be observed, also, that men may reject the Gospel, not only because they are dissolute in their conduct, but for various other reasons; because, perhaps, they are too busy or too idle, to examine carefully into the truth; because, like Gallio, "they care "for none of these things," and, like him, "drive them away" with contempt "from "the judgment-seat"* of their own mind; because they give themselves up to a warm, lively imagination; and are impatient to show that they have more depth of thought, more freedom of spirit, and elevation of mind, than the rest of the world; because, in fine, they are ambitious to figure at the head of a sect, to enjoy the delightful triumph of beating down long-established opinions, and erecting upon their ruins a little favourite system of their own. Now all these causes of infidelity, though less culpable than downright profligacy, are yet evidently great faults, and indicate more or

* Acts xviii. 16.

less a depraved turn of mind; and from immoralities of *this* kind at least scarce any sceptics are entirely free. Or, admit that some are; yet these instances are confessedly very rare; and a prudent man would no more choose to embark his morality on so precarious a bottom, than he would venture to walk in the dark amidst rocks and precipices, because some perhaps have done it without receiving any harm. In general, therefore, the ground of unbelief laid down by our Saviour in the text is undoubtedly a true one; and if a man shuns the light, it is an almost certain sign that his deeds are, in some sense or other, in a greater or a lesser degree, evil, and consequently his condemnation just.

Yet how can this be? you will perhaps say, Can God punish his creatures for walking by that light which he himself has set up in their own minds, though he has at the same time perhaps revealed a fuller light from heaven?* Most certainly he can; for the very same reason that a prince might punish

* De quoi puis-je être coupable en servant Dieu selon les lumières qu'il donne à mon esprit, & selon les sentimens qu'il inspire à mon cœur? *Rousseau, t.* 8. *p.* 67.

his subjects for acting by the law of nature, instead of governing themselves by the civil laws of the land. It is not a matter of indifference, whether you embrace Christianity or not. Though reason could answer all the purposes of Revelation, (which is far, very far from being the case,) yet you are not at liberty to make it your sole guide, if there be such a thing as a true Revelation. We are the subjects of the Almighty: and whether we will acknowledge it or not, we live, and cannot *but* live, under his government. His will is the law of his kingdom. If he has made no express declaration of his will, we must collect it as well as we can from what we know of his nature and our own. But if he *has* expressly declared his will, *that* is the law we are to be governed by. We may indeed refuse to be governed by it; but it is at our peril if we do; for if it proves to be a *true* declaration of his will, to reject it is *rebellion.*

But to reject or receive it, you may allege, is not a thing in your own power. Belief depends not on your will, but your understanding. And will the righteous Judge

of the earth condemn you for want of understanding?* No; but he may and will condemn you for the *wrong conduct* of your understanding. It is not indeed in your power to believe whatever you please, whether credible or incredible, but it *is* in your power to consider thoroughly, whether a supposed incredibility be real or only apparent. It *is* in your power to bestow a greater or less degree of attention on the evidence before you. It *is* in your power to examine it with an earnest desire to find out the truth, and a firm resolution to embrace it wherever you do find it; or, on the contrary, to bring with you a heart full of incorrigible depravity, or invincible prepossessions. Have you then truly and honestly done every thing that is confessedly in your power, towards forming a right judgment of Revelation? Have you ever laid before yourself in one view the whole collective evidence of Christianity: the consistence, harmony, and connection of all its various parts; the long chain of prophe-

* Est-on maêtre de croire, ou de ne pas croire? Est-ce un crime de n'avoir pas su bien argumenter? *Rousseau, tom. 6. p 305*

cies undeniably completed in it; the astonishing and well-attested miracles that attended it; the perfect sanctity of its Author; the purity of its precepts; the sublimity of its doctrines; the amazing rapidity of its progress; the illustrious company of confessors, saints, and martyrs, who died to confirm its truth; together with an infinite number of collateral proofs and subordinate circumstances, all concurring to form such a body of evidence, as no other truth in the world can show; such as must necessarily bear down, by its own weight and magnitude, all trivial objections to particular parts?* Surely these things are not trifles: surely they at least demand seriousness and attention. Have you then done the Gospel this common piece of justice? Have you ever sat down to consider it with impartiality and candour; without any favourite vice or early prejudice, without any fondness for applause, or novelty, or refinement, to mislead you? Have you examined it with the same care and diligence, that you would examine a title to an estate?

* See Dr. PALEY's View of the Evidences of Christianity, and a short and elegant Summary of them by Dr. BEATTIE.

Have you inquired for proper books? Have you read the defences of Revelation as well as the attacks upon it? Have you in difficult points applied for the opinion of wise and learned friends; just as you would consult the ablest lawyers when your property was concerned, or the most skilful physicians when your life was at stake? If you can truly say, that you have done all these things; if you have faithfully bestowed on these inquiries all the leisure and abilities you are master of, and called in every help within your reach, there is little danger of any material doubts remaining upon your mind. But if after all there should, be not afraid; trust in God and be at peace; "if your own heart condemn "you not, then may you have confidence "towards God."* You are in the hands of a gracious Master, who will not require more of you than you are able to perform. To the modest, the humble, the diligent, the virtuous enquirer; who labours after conviction, but cannot thoroughly arrive at it; who never attempts or wishes to infuse his scru-

* 1 John iii. 21.

ples into others; who earnestly strives, who fervently prays for more light and strength; crying out with all the passionate sincerity of an honest heart, "Lord, I believe, help "thou mine unbelief*;" to him every equitable allowance will undoubtedly be made, every instance of compassionate tenderness be shown. "For like as a father pitieth "his own children, even so is the Lord mer-"ciful to them that fear him." † But to them who neither *fear* nor *regard* him; to the bold unbelieving libertine, who is against the Gospel, because the Gospel is against him: to the man of pride and paradox, who burns to distinguish himself from the vulgar by the novelty of his opinions, and would disdain to follow the common herd of mankind, even though he knew they were leading him to Heaven; to the subtle minute philosopher, who refines away every dictate of common sense, and is lost in the dark profound of his own wretched sophistry; to the buffoon, who laughs and takes pains to make all the world laugh at every thing serious and sacred; to the indolent, negligent, su-

* Mark ix. 24. † Ps. ciii. 13.

perficial freethinker, who reads a little, takes for granted a great deal, and understands nothing thoroughly; to the man of pleasure and amusement, who treats all these things with a giddy, wanton, contemptuous levity; and thinks that the whole fabric of Revelation may be overturned by a silly cavil, or a profane jest, thrown out in the gay moments of convivial mirth: to these I say, and all like these, the Almighty will one day most assuredly show, that his gracious offers of Salvation are not to be despised, and trampled upon, and ridiculed with impunity.

Consider then, you who reject the Gospel (if any such be here), consider, I entreat you, *on what grounds* you reject it; and think a little seriously on these things, once more in your lives, before you resolve never to think again. Look well into your own hearts, and see whether you are *really*, what perhaps you profess to be, unbelievers on conviction, or whether you have taken up your infidelity, as some do their faith, upon trust. It becomes not *us* to judge you uncharitably; but indeed it becomes *you* to examine yourselves very strictly. You may easily deceive the world;

you may, if you please, deceive yourselves; but God you cannot deceive. He, to whom all hearts are open as the day, he knows whether you are conscientious and honest doubters, or careless prejudiced profane despisers of his word. "It is a small thing for "you to be judged of man's judgment; he "that judgeth you is the Lord*;" and by the unerring rules of his justice you must finally stand or fall. Think then whether you can face that justice without dismay; whether you can boldly plead before the tribunal of Christ the sincerity of your unbelief as a bar to your condemnation. That plea may possibly in *some* cases be a good one. God grant it may in yours! But remember this one thing; that you stake your own souls upon the truth of it.

* 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

SERMON III.

JAMES i. 13.

LET NO MAN SAY WHEN HE IS TEMPTED, I AM TEMPTED OF GOD; FOR GOD CANNOT BE TEMPTED WITH EVIL, NEITHER TEMPTETH HE ANY MAN.

NOTWITHSTANDING this general prohibition, there is one sense in which it is very allowable to say (for the sacred writers themselves have said it) that men *are* sometimes tempted of God. And that is when by *tempting* any one is meant only *trying* him, putting his sincerity, his obedience, his faith, or any of his other virtues to the test. In this sense God *tempted* Abraham, when he commanded him to offer up his son.* In this sense he may be said to have tempted the Israelites in the wilderness, on purpose (as Moses expressly tells us) to

* Gen. xxii. 1.

he who is the author of their constitution has given them appetites which they are not able to govern, and placed them in the midst of temptations which it is impossible to resist or escape? That the powers with which he has furnished them are not equal to the duties he requires, and that therefore he alone is answerable for the crimes into which they fall?

It should be charitably presumed, that out of the great numbers who openly avow this plea of constitution, and the still greater numbers who secretly adopt and act upon it, there are but few, in proportion, who see the flagrant impiety of it; who are sensible that they say in effect what the apostle tells us no man ought to say, that they are tempted of God. But whether they perceive this consequence, or whether they perceive it not, it is highly requisite to show the falsehood of a notion, which strikes at the very root of all morality and religion, and is the favourite argument in the mouth of every libertine who thinks it worth while to reason at all upon the subject.

It must be confessed, indeed, that this life is (what it would be strange if a state of

probation was not) a very painful, and almost constant struggle between appetite and duty. But it will be found, I trust, upon a fair inquiry, that we are not so unequal to the conflict as some men would willingly persuade us to believe. They have themselves been vanquished, and would have it thought impossible to conquer. They would have us judge of the difficulty of the enterprise from the weak efforts they made to surmount it, and wilfully magnify the force of the enemy, in order to extenuate the guilt and the disgrace of their defeat.

I mean not here to say, that this conquest is to be obtained always by mere human strength alone. This were to betray the very cause of Christianity for the sake of defending one of its duties. Mere human strength alone can, indeed, on some occasions, when properly exerted, do great things; much greater than most men are willing to imagine. This is evident from those well-known instances of heroic virtue in the heathen world, delivered down to us in history, which incontestably prove, that the native dignity of virtue, and the simple efforts of unenlightened and unassisted

reason, are *sometimes* able to stand the shock of temptation, in the most delicate and trying circumstances. But these instances are very rare; to be found only among some few men of elevated souls and improved understandings; and are never mentioned but as the moral prodigies and wonders of antiquity. Had man been able of himself "to "overcome the world, and to work out his "own salvation," there had been no need of any new religion; God's grace had been superfluous, and Christ had died in vain. But the gross depravity of mankind, before the publication of the Gospel, too plainly showed the weakness of human nature, when left to itself, and evinced the absolute necessity of some extraordinary support. To give us this support, and to guide our steps aright amidst the snares and dangers that every where surround us, our Redeemer came from heaven; and it is the peculiar glory and privilege of Christianity, that it is the only religion which ever did or could propose sufficient motives, and afford sufficient helps, to fortify its disciples against the allurements of sin, and to keep them unspotted from the world.

With the Deist, then, or the Atheist, with him that professes only natural religion, or him that professes none at all, we pretend not to contest the point; we readily allow temptation to be, *on their principles*, sometimes irresistible, and must leave them to the hard dominion of unbridled passions, and the tumults of a distempered soul.

But to him who believes that there *is* a God, and that he is possessed of all those attributes, which both Reason and Revelation ascribe to him, there cannot be the least shadow of a doubt in this point, if he does not suffer his passions to throw a cloud over his understanding. For can he seriously believe that a God of infinite wisdom has given us a rule for the direction of our lives, and yet rendered it in many cases absolutely impossible for us to conform to that rule? Can he persuade himself that a God of infinite mercy and goodness, though he *knows* the strength of his creatures, yet exacts what is beyond it, and with all the cruelty of an Egyptian task-master, demands virtue, without having given us the capacity of *being* virtuous? Can he suppose that a Being of

infinite justice, first compels us to sin, by the strength of our appetites, and then punishes the wretched sinner; that he is at once the author and avenger of iniquity? Can he imagine, that he who is holiness itself, who as the text expresses it *cannot be tempted of evil*, who is of purer eyes than even to behold it without indignation, is yet capable of tempting others to what he himself forbids and abhors? Can he, in fine, bring himself to think, that the precepts, the exhortations, the promises, the threatenings of the Gospel, are all a mockery and insult upon us, setting before us life and death, good and evil, and applying to us as free agents and accountable beings, when at the same time constitution or temptation takes from us all liberty of will, and necessarily determines us to a course of vice? This were to convert the gracious Father of mankind into a frantic and capricious tyrant over his wretched creatures, to strip him of his best perfections, to make vain the noblest faculties of man, and overturn the whole fabric of natural as well as revealed religion; which is surely purchasing a little self-

defence at much too high a price, and doubling instead of extenuating our guilt.

Had God made no express declarations on this point, what has been already said would be abundantly sufficient to decide it. But he who well knew how apt men are to deceive themselves in inquiries of this nature, and how little sometimes the most conclusive arguments avail against the clamours of appetite, and the attractions of pleasure, did not leave so important a truth to be collected from reason only, nor trusted the strength of our understandings, and the honesty of our hearts, in a case where they are both so liable to be misled. If any thing is clearly and expressly revealed to us in Scripture, it is this; that we want not the *means* of subduing temptation, if we will but make use of them; that "our faith will enable us to over-"come the world; that if we resist the devil "he will flee from us; that, therefore, when-"ever we fall, it is entirely our own fault, "our own infirmity; and that every man is "then only tempted, when he is drawn away "of his own lusts and enticed*;" of his *own*

* 1 John v. 4. James iv. 7. Ib. i. 14.

lusts, properly so called; not those passions and appetites which God gave him, but those unreasonable cravings which he has himself created by habitual indulgence and unnatural provocations. Nay, in order to quiet all our fears, and to give us the fullest satisfaction on this head, we are assured, that God will, by his Holy Spirit, "help our "infirmities, and strengthen us with might "in the inner man; that he knoweth how to "deliver the godly out of temptation; and "if we ourselves cannot *find* a way to es- "cape, he will *make* us one, and will not "suffer us to be tempted (unless we are "*determined* to be so) above what we are "able to bear."*

After such strong assurances as these, by which God Almighty stands as it were *engaged* to befriend us, one would not think it possible for the wit of man to call in question so plain a truth, as that of our ability, with the divine assistance, to correct constitution and resist temptation. And indeed men are very ready to acknowledge it in every case but their own; a plain proof

* Rom. viii. 26. Eph. iii. 16. 2 Pet. ii. 9. 1 Cor. x. 13.

that the reason why they do not acknowledge it in their own case too, is not because they want evidence, but because they want honesty. Every one thinks that his own darling passion is that only insuperable one which was destined to reign over the heart of man, and readily gives up all the rest. Believe what every man says of himself, and there is not a temptation but is invincible; believe what he says of his neighbours, and there is none but may be easily subdued. Nay, even in the very same species and degree of wickedness, we have different measures of judging of ourselves and other men. If our brother be overtaken in a fault, we condemn him without hesitation and without mercy, though he has perhaps all the infirmity of human nature to plead in his behalf. And yet we can calmly acquit ourselves, when guilty of the very same crimes, by a thousand pretended alleviations. We form distinctions in our own favour which have no foundation in nature, we find out particularities in our situation which escape every eye but our own. Almost every man, in spite of reason and experience, will flatter himself, that

there is some circumstance or other peculiar to his own case, which, as it distinguishes him from the common lot, exempts him also from the common guilt of other men. His passions are stronger, his governing powers are weaker, or the temptation that assails him more violent than human nature ever before experienced. Another man, perhaps, might have come off victorious in the conflict, but as for himself, he is so unhappily framed, or so unluckily circumstanced, that he finds it in vain to resist; he finds it impossible to oppose a conspiracy, which seems formed against his virtue by every thing around him.

Nothing is more fatal, and at the same time nothing more common, than this piece of self-delusion. It is for this reason that, when St. Paul is endeavouring to strengthen the Corinthians against the trials they were exposed to, he sets out with assuring them, "that no temptation had taken them but "such as *was common to man*," as well knowing, that till he had convinced them of this, all other arguments would be ineffectual. To men possessed with this opinion of uncommon difficulties in their situation,

it is in vain to allege the examples of those, who have successfully struggled against the pleasures or persecutions of the world, and fought the good fight with glory. The answer is always at hand: They were not tempted as we were, or they would have fallen as we did. ONE, however, we are sure there was, who was in all things "tempted like as we are, sin only except-"ed," and who was for this very reason tempted, that his disciples and soldiers might not despair of conquering an adversary, whom they had seen the Captain of their salvation subdue before them.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to us, not to impose upon ourselves by false suppositions of some uncommon degree of violence in the temptations that befal us, or the appetites that are given to us. There are probably thousands of our fellow-creatures, who are in as trying a situation as ourselves; thousands at least who think themselves so; and have therefore full as good a claim to the plea of peculiarity as we have; that is, in fact, no claim at all; for what is common to so many, can be peculiar to none. Among

so great a number in similar circumstances, some, it is certain, *do* resist the solicitations that assail them; and if we are not equally successful, it is only because we are not equally vigilant and active. Sacred history (to say nothing of profane) will furnish us with numberless examples of the most invincible integrity, temperance, and fortitude, under the severest trials, under every possible disadvantage, both of nature and situation, that can be imagined. What, therefore, has been done once, may be done again. Human nature is nearly the same in all ages. Our passions are not stronger than those of our forefathers; our difficulties in some respects much less; our natural strength and supernatural assistances to the full as great; and if therefore we do not struggle against the world as effectually as they did, we are left without excuse.

But if, at last, men will be convinced by no experience but their own, to their own we must refer them; and if they will neither believe the testimony of man, nor the promises of God, they will at least believe themselves, and give credit to the report of their

own hearts. And in fact may we not appeal to every man's own breast, whether he has not actually, on certain occasions, resisted those solicitations which he declares are not to be resisted; whether he cannot recollect a time when a regard to reputation, to interest, to decency, to propriety, or some other casual consideration, has repressed the violence of his predominant passion, when most urgent and impetuous? The common occurrences of life make this absolutely necessary; and every one that is not lost to all sense of honour and shame, and all regard to external appearances, must confess it to have been frequently the case with himself. How often, for instance, does the presence of some respectable person restrain even the most irritable man alive from a sudden burst of passion, which at another time, and under the same temptation to indulge, he would have declared it was impossible to control? It is notorious that men *can* mortify their strongest passions when they please, and that they do every day forego the most exquisite gratifications, from what they call *prudential motives*. They are not any more

importunate appetites in man, than those of hunger and thirst, and yet what is more common than, for the sake of life and health, to do the utmost violence to both? Nay, even when the natural rage of thirst is still further exasperated by the burnings of a fever, yet, if such abstinence be deemed necessary, we can and do deny these most earnest cravings of appetite, and in this and many other instances undergo far greater torment for the sake of preserving a life we *must* part with at last, than is almost ever necessary for securing the possession of life eternal.

What our own experience teaches us, our own consciences confirm to us, which, by instantly smiting us for every wicked action, however strongly we were prompted to it by nature, or solicited by temptation, loudly intimate to us, that it was in our power to have done otherwise; for what is naturally impossible, can never be imputable, either here or hereafter. The truth is, these specious pretences of ungovernable passions and invincible temptations cannot stand the test even at the partial tribunal of our own hearts; and how then shall they appear before that

most awful and impartial one, THE JUDGMENT-SEAT OF GOD?

Let us not, then, any longer delude ourselves, and affront our Maker, by throwing all the blame of our misconduct on the strength of temptaion or the frailty of our nature. It is enough that we have acted wickedly; let us not go on moreover, "to charge God foolishly." Let us rather, with the royal Psalmist, "confess our wickedness, and be sorry for our sins." A casual lapse, or a distressful surprise, God may and will, no doubt, upon our sincere repentance, forgive; but a cool deliberate defence of our impiety, is an insult upon Heaven, which can hope for no mercy. To accuse our constitution, is to accuse the author of that constitution; to say we are by any means compelled to sin, is in fact to say, "we are tempted of God;" an assertion not only repugnant to the plainest declarations of Scripture, but to the plainest dictates of common sense. It is not God that tempts, but man that *will* be tempted. It is not by God's appointment, but by man's own negligence and supineness, that temptation becomes too strong for his virtue.

The growth of the passions is gradual, and may be seasonably checked; the approach of temptation is visible, and may be easily guarded against. But, instead of that, we generally invite the danger, and court our own ruin; we foster up some favourite appetite by constant indulgence, and then mistaking, wilfully mistaking, this monstrous production of habit for the genuine child of nature, very disingenuously complain of our passions and constitutions. We see the enemy of our salvation approaching at a distance, and, instead of preparing to make a vigorous resistance, or (what is generally the safest way) a timely retreat, we either sit still in stupid indolence and suffer ourselves to be subdued, or we run to meet the destroyer with open arms, and make haste to be undone.

That some men are by nature more prone to vice than others, and that there is a difference in the original frame and temperament of our minds, as there certainly is in that of our bodies, is not perhaps to be absolutely denied; but it must at the same time be allowed, that a bad constitution of mind, as well as of body, may by proper care and attention

be greatly if not wholly amended. And, as it sometimes happens that they who have the weakest and most distempered frames, by means of an exact temperance and an unshaken perseverance in rule and method, outlive those of a robuster make and more luxuriant health; so there are abundant instances, where men of the most depraved turn of mind, by keeping a steady guard upon their weak parts, and gradually, but continually, correcting their defects, "going " on from strength to strength," and from one degree of perfection to another, have at length arrived at a higher pitch of virtue than those for whom nature had done much more, and who would therefore do but little for themselves. It is said of the great Athenian philosopher, that he was by nature the very reverse of all those virtues which afterwards shone so conspicuous in his conduct; that he was born one of the worst, and lived and died one of the best of men. This at least is certain, that, whatever may be the corruption of our nature, whatever the power of pain to stagger our virtue, or of pleasure to seduce it, it is impossible we

can be so formed, or so situated by a just and good God, as to be under an absolute necessity of transgressing those laws which he has laid down for the regulation of our conduct. We may rest assured that he will give us powers, either natural or supernatural, to balance our defects. In the common trials of our virtue, the common efforts of human nature, and the common influences of the Holy Spirit, will be able to support us: "if any temptation take us, "*more* than is common to man," God will send us, provided we desire, and endeavour to deserve it, more than common assistance; for his strength is made perfect in our weakness, and we may in this sense most truly say with the Apostle, "that when we are "weak, then in reality are we strong."*

We are not, however, to conclude from hence, that God will deliver us out of temptation without any trouble on our part. As without *him* we can do nothing, so neither will he do any thing without *us*. His grace is not intended to supersede, but to cooperate with our own most earnest endea-

* 2 Cor. xii. 10.

vours: and the most effectual method of securing to ourselves the Divine assistance, is to make a speedy and vigorous use of all those means with which we are furnished, for working out our salvation. What these means are, and how we may apply them to the best advantage, will be considered in a separate discourse.

SERMON IV.

JAMES i. 13.

LET NO MAN SAY WHEN HE IS TEMPTED, I AM TEMPTED OF GOD; FOR GOD CANNOT BE TEMPTED WITH EVIL, NEITHER TEMPTETH HE ANY MAN.

IN the preceding discourse I attempted to show, that to throw all the blame of our vices on the infirmity of our natural constitution, is in fact to say that we are "tempted "of God;" that this indirect accusation of our Maker is as groundless as it is impious; that the notion of ungovernable passions and irresistible temptations, contradicts our clearest apprehensions of the Divine nature and perfections, the most express declarations of Scripture, the testimony of past ages,

could command, he might, in this instance at least, have escaped that heavy load of guilt and misery which he and the vile partner of his throne and of his crimes brought down upon their own heads. But the proximity of this vineyard to his own house had, among other circumstances, captivated his fancy; and, instead of resisting the first impression, and bringing his silly passion to the bar of reason, he indulged and cherished it, till he began to think it absolutely impossible for him to live without that favourite spot which he wanted, it seems, for *a garden of herbs.** Unable to accomplish this important purpose, "he laid him down "on his bed, and turned away his face, and "would eat no bread." † This heavy affliction, however, was soon removed. His wife gave him, as she had promised, the vineyard, which she purchased by a murder, and he went down with joy to take possession of it. But his joy, as is commonly the case with such triumphant sinners, was of very short duration. He was met on the very spot with that severe rebuke, to which his own

* 1 Kings xxi. 2. † Ib. ver. 4.

conscience must have given irresistible force. "Hast thou killed, and also taken posses-"sion?—Thus saith the Lord, In the place "where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, "shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine."*

Let this memorable example teach us, as well it may, not to allow our imaginations to overbear our judgments; not to give more importance to the objects of our wishes than their real intrinsic worth deserves; not to persuade ourselves, in short, as we are but too apt to do, that the whole happiness of our lives depends on the possession of the merest trifles. To secure ourselves against this fatal error, let us learn to look on things in that true unerring light in which the Gospel of Christ holds them out to us; and in estimating the value of earthly enjoyments, let us be careful to consider, not merely the present pleasure or profit attending them, but every diminishing or debasing circumstance which naturally belongs to them; the shortness of their duration, the pains it generally costs us to obtain them, the substantial happiness of which they frequently deprive us; and the shame, ignominy, remorse, and

* 1 Kings xxi. 19.

ous light of Revelation, breaks in upon the soul. And it is never to be enough lamented, that they who have the first care of our persons, and who ought to train up the soul to habits of self-government, by seasonable denials and well-judged severities; that these, I say, through ignorance, inattention, or ill-timed tenderness, too often betray that most important trust. By indulging every froward wish, every wayward humour of the infant mind, they frequently sow deep in our hearts the seeds of vice; and cherish, instead of checking, those turbulent desires, which first trying their strength in trifling, and therefore disregarded instances, afterwards break out into the most mischievous excesses, to the disturbance of our own happiness and the peace of mankind. It will therefore require some assiduity and address to correct this unhappy defect of our constitution, and the still more unhappy consequences of our education. We must watch the first motions, and suppress the first risings of our irregular desires. We must, from the moment that reason takes the reins into her hands, assert her natural sovereignty over the soul, and,

by a timely and vigorous display of her power, strike a terror into her seditious subjects, and awe them at once into submission. We must be daily confirming her superiority, by exerting it on all occasions, and making use even of the slightest advantages over the passions. For every victory of reason over appetite, however inconsiderable in itself, yet by animating the one, and dispiriting the other, adds new strength to the mind; and insensibly habituates it to resist the strongest solicitations that can assail our virtue.

It is with this view, and this only, that the Gospel of Christ so warmly and so wisely recommends to us the much-neglected duties of *voluntary mortification and self-denial.* Christianity is of too tender and compassionate a turn to delight in the misery of its disciples, or to take an ill-natured pleasure in thwarting our inclinations, and counteracting our nature. It never enjoins a hardship merely to see how well we can bear it, but in order to prepare us for some greater trial which we must necessarily undergo. Our blessed Lord well knew what was in man, and what kind of

management was the properest for him. He knew, that if we never denied our passions before it was absolutely necessary, they would not be denied when it was so; and that, unless we strengthened the governing powers of the soul, by frequently exercising their authority in lesser matters, they would not be able to maintain it in the weightier matters of the law.

When therefore we are commanded in Scripture, "to deny ourselves; to take up "our cross and follow Christ; to mortify "our members which are on the earth; to "beware of conforming to the world; to "pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right "hand that offends us*;" these expressions do by no means imply what some have chosen to infer from them; that we are to renounce the world and all its pleasures, employments, connections, and concerns; to bury ourselves in cloisters or deserts; to forego every thing that is cheerful or agreeable to our nature, and consume our whole life in solitude, abstinence, devotion, and unremitting austerity. This is an idea of our religion which nothing but the strangest misconception of it by its

* Luke ix. 23. Col. iii. 5. Rom. xii. 2. Matt. v. 29, 30.

friends, or the grossest misrepresentation of it by its enemies, could possibly have suggested. According to the fairest and most established rules of interpretation, when applied to the strong figurative language of the Orientals, these phrases, and many others of the like import in the sacred writings, mean nothing more than (what every wise moralist must approve, and every man of experience must know to be absolutely necessary to the preservation of our virtue in the midst of a corrupt world,) a constant habit of vigilance, circumspection, and self-government; a cautious and jealous attention to the movements of our minds and the progress of our passions; a discreet and sober, not a criminal and unbounded conformity to the world; a renunciation of *ourselves*, that is, of all *selfish and sordid views* that interfere with the conscientious discharge of every religious obligation; a strict abstinence from all irregular and immoral gratifications, without either declining any of the duties, or sullenly withdrawing from the harmless enjoyments, conveniences, and comforts of social life. It is true, in short, that an exact, or, if you please, rigorous

discipline, is required of every man who enlists under the banners of the cross. "He "must endure hardness as a good soldier "of Jesus Christ."* And although this has been made a frequent topic of ridicule, or of complaint, among those who call themselves philosophers, and has been represented as a grievous burthen too heavy for human nature to support; yet this *moral discipline* of the soul is grounded on the same reasons, and justifiable on the same principles, as that strict *military discipline*, to which it is frequently compared in Scripture; and which every wise commander finds it necessary to exact and to maintain among his soldiers. It may appear to them sometimes harsh and severe, but it leads to order, ease, security, and victory. The case is the same in our Christian warfare. Every restraint which the Gospel imposes on us tends ultimately to make our "yoke easy and our "burthen light;" and its very cruelties, if we may call them so, are in fact tender mercies. We must therefore submit with patience to the sacrifices it demands from us, and we shall be amply repaid for the transient

* 2 Tim. ii. 3.

uneasiness which at first perhaps they may give us. We must, in compliance with its injunctions, not only abstain from those lusts which "openly war against the soul *," but, like them who strive for the mastery in the combat or the race, must be "temperate "in all things †;" must train up ourselves for the good fight of faith by frequent preparatory exercises, must "keep the body under, "and bring it into subjection ‡" by timely precautions, and judicious restraints, that, when temptation calls upon us for the trial of our virtue, our desires may be found patient of control, and able to support a disappointment.

III. There are two extreme to be equally avoided in our moral conduct, because, though opposite to each other, they may prove equally fatal to our virtue; a too high opinion of our adversary's strength, or a too great confidence in our own. If once we are persuaded that all resistance is vain, we shall never call forth the strength that God has put into our hands, but tamely give

* 1 Pet. ii. 11. † 1 Cor. ix. 25. ‡ Ib. ix. 27.

ourselves up on the first appearance of danger; or if, on the contrary, we flatter ourselves that *no* resistance is necessary, "a sudden de-"struction" shall come upon us unawares, and we shall fall into what may be properly called "our own mischief." To steer then discreetly between these two opposite points, is what demands our utmost care and attention. We must, on the one hand, possess ourselves with a proper sense of our own natural resources, a firm trust in God's supernatural assistance, and a thorough conviction that our endeavours, if honestly and earnestly exerted, "shall not be in vain in the Lord;" and on the other, from a due consciousness of our own weakness and corruption, neglect no precaution in our power, nor wantonly or heedlessly expose ourselves to unnecessary danger. This indeed is the more common error of the two, and therefore to be the more carefully guarded against. Men are much more apt to have too high, than too low, an opinion of their own fortitude, and so fall through want, rather than excess, of caution. It will, therefore, generally be the safest way to distrust our own courage and

resolution, and to avoid rather than to provoke temptation; for we may often save ourselves by a timely retreat, when we should have made but a weak and inglorious defence.

It is indeed always our own fault if ever we find ourselves beset with solicitations which prove too strong for our virtue. We may generally recollect a time, when, if we had but exerted the least resolution, they must have vanished before us. But we indolently give way to one wrong compliance after another, which we might easily have resisted at first; and then, when it is too late to exert the strength which our Maker has given us, we boldly reproach him with having given us none at all. There is, in short, a point at which we have it in our power to stop; but if, through a fatal negligence, or a false security, we let that opportunity slip; if we suffer ourselves to be drawn a little farther, and still a little farther on, whatever snares we may afterwards be entangled in, we can have no reason to complain of being surprised by stratagem, or overcome by superior force.

IV. But in order to guard against tempt-

ation still more effectually, take unto you, my brethren, the SHIELD OF FAITH *; for this, as St. John assures you, "is the vic- "tory that overcometh the world, even our "faith." † And the Apostle might well promise these great things of faith, since it is this which supplies us with one of the principal things we want, a counterpoise to the pleasures and the interests of this life. For by faith is here meant a firm, a rational, and a vital belief of the being of God, of the religion taught by Christ, and the truth of his promises and his threatenings as declared in the Gospel; a persuasion that God *is*, and that he is, through his blessed Son, "a "rewarder of all those that diligently seek "him." ‡ It is this persuasion, and this only, which in certain circumstances can preserve our integrity and our innocence unshaken. When this world, as it sometimes happens, spreads before us on a sudden its most powerful allurements and advantages, and every thing conspires to make them operate with their full force upon the heart; what is there that can destroy the influence of such dangerous attractions, and rescue us

* Eph. vi. 16. † 1 John v. 4. ‡ Heb. x. 16.

from present ruin? Can honour, can interest, can reputation, or those most watchful natural guardians of our virtue, pride and shame? These, alas! whatever they may do in some trifling instances, are found to be weak and slender ties, "as flax burnt with "fire*," when opposed to the violence of some passions, and the shock of some temptations. It is here then faith steps in to our relief, and interposes, between us and danger, that HEAVENLY SHIELD, which is proof against all assailants, or, to use the more forcible and expressive language of Scripture, "where-"with we shall be able to quench all the "fiery darts of the wicked one."† Of this every sincere believer may have, whenever he pleases, experimental conviction. For if he will but frequently and seriously meditate on those awful doctrines which the Christian revelation sets before him; that there is a Moral Governor of the universe, infinite in wisdom, justice, power, and holiness; that in his presence we continually live and act; that his all-seeing eye is constantly fixed upon us, "is about our bed,

* Judges xv. 14. † Eph. vi. 14.

" and about our path, and spieth out all our " ways;" that there is not so much as " a " word in our mouth, or a thought in our " heart, but he knoweth it altogether*;" that when the glory of this world has passed away, there will be a general resurrection to another, a future state of existence, a most solemn day of retribution; that our great Judge will then require a strict account of all our thoughts, words, and actions, and will make it known to the whole world, that, " verily there *is* a reward for the right- " eous, doubtless there *is* a God that judg- " eth the earth†:" if, I say, the sincere Christian will but take care, by frequent meditation and recollection, to impress a deep sense of these momentous truths upon his soul, and render them familiar to his thoughts, he will by degrees so increase his faith, and so accustom himself to this train of reflections, that the moment temptation assaults him, they will habitually and mechanically recur to his mind; the rewards and punishments of a future world will instantly present themselves to his view; the fear of the Lord will come upon him, and

* Psalm cxxxix. 3, 4. † Psalm lviii. 11.

he will say with the Patriarch on a like occasion, "How can I do this great wicked-"ness, and sin against God?"*

V. There is still one thing more remaining, which, though occasionally touched upon before, is of such great importance as to require in this place a distinct consideration, since without it all our other resources will be ineffectual, and that is the assistance of God's Holy Spirit. To our great comfort we are assured, that although the powers of our own weak and corrupt nature may frequently be insufficient to carry us successfully through the difficulties we have to encounter, yet the grace of God will be at all times, and in the greatest exigencies, sufficient for us.† This divine and powerful instrument of our deliverance is, as we are informed, always to be obtained by prayer. "Our Heavenly Father will give his Holy "Spirit to them that ask him. Whatsoever "we ask in prayer, believing, we shall re-"ceive."‡ But then it is not in time of need only we must "seek the Lord;" in the

* Gen. xxxix. 9. † 2 Cor. xii. 9.
‡ Luke xi. 13. Matt. xxi. 22.

moment of danger we may be reduced to such straits that nothing but a miracle can save us. We must therefore make God our friend long before, and provide against the evil day while it is yet afar off, and all seems peace and security around us. His Holy Spirit is not to be made subservient to a present purpose, to be invoked in our necessity, and slighted in time of safety; he must either abide constantly with us, or for ever remain a stranger to us. It is not an occasional ejaculation, vented by accident, or extorted by fear, that will bring him down from heaven; it is only upon repeated solicitations, and a due preparation for his reception, that this Divine guest will condescend to take up his abode with us. We are, as the Apostle expresses it in his strong manner of speaking, "to pray always with "all prayer and supplication, and watch "thereunto with all perseverance." * And this will not only draw down upon us a plentiful effusion of Divine grace, but improve and confirm our own internal strength; will engage our attention, excite our industry, increase our caution, and even suggest to us

* Eph. vi. 18.

every human means of deliverance. For prayer has of itself a natural tendency to obtain its own purposes, and we grow insensibly better whilst we wish to be so.

It is, in short, on our own vigilance, circumspection, and self-discipline, added to our most earnest prayers for the Divine assistance, that all our virtue here, and all our happiness hereafter, through the merits of our Redeemer, entirely depend. If a man *will* throw himself in the way of danger, and venture to the very brink of vice; if he *will* suffer his thoughts to wander, or dwell upon improper objects; if he knows his weak parts, and yet leaves them without defence; if he sees a growing appetite, and instead of checking, seeks every opportunity to feed and to inflame it; if he confines his views to present enjoyments, nor ever spends a thought upon futurity; if, in fine, he lives without God in the world, without any awe of his presence, any trust in his assistance, or any fear of his judgments, he must expect that the slightest temptations will get the better of his virtue, already half subdued.

But if, on the contrary, he sets himself

seriously and in earnest to search out and to correct his infirmities; if he flies at the first approach of temptation, and takes alarm at the most distant intimation of danger; if he curbs that busy dangerous power, the imagination; "if he keeps his heart with all di-"ligence*," and guards the issues of life; if, as the Apostle advises, he takes unto him THE SHIELD OF FAITH, opposing the joys of heaven to the pleasures of sin, and having less regard to a present gratification than the future recompense of reward; above all, if he never ceases importuning the throne of Grace for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit to purify his soul, invigorate his resolutions, and support him under all the difficulties and discouragements of his Christian warfare; he may depend upon it, that whatever may be his *constitution*, whatever the nature or degree of the temptations he is exposed to, not all the powers of darkness shall be able to prevail against him. Though he may perhaps accidently fall, yet he shall "never be cast away; for the Lord up-"holdeth him with his hand." †

* Prov. iv. 23. † Psalm xxxvii. 24.

SERMON V.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT: BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.

THIS is one among numberless other passages in Holy Writ, in which a future judgment, and an eternal state of existence hereafter, are clearly and positively announced to us; and it is from these declarations of the Gospel, and these only, that we derive the *certain* expectation of immortal life. To pretend, therefore, as some have done, that we had already sufficient notices of this important truth from the light of nature, and that the conviction, produced by these

notices, is so complete as to supersede the necessity of any further information, is to give nature a degree of merit to which she is far from having any just pretensions, and to make a very ungrateful return for the invaluable advantages we have received, in this and many other respects, from the Revelation made by Christ. But yet to assert, on the other hand, that natural religion gives us not the smallest ground to hope that we shall survive the grave, and that every argument for it, except those which Scripture supplies, is perfectly vain and nugatory, and unworthy of the least regard, is surely running into another extreme, no less destitute of foundation, and no less hurtful in its consequences, than the former. * The natural and moral evidences of another life after this, though confessedly inferior, very greatly inferior in authority and force to those of Revelation, yet undoubtedly have their proper weight and use; and to depreciate their just value,

* It has been very justly observed, that some writers, by exalting the powers of reason, in matters of religion, too high, have destroyed the *necessity* of Revelation; and others, by degrading them too low, have risked the *reasonableness* of it. Div. Leg. vol. ii. p. 26.

and sink them as much as possible in the estimation of mankind, is to do no real service (although there may have been a sincere *intention* of doing it) to the cause of Christianity; which has no need, in this or in any other instance, to rise on the ruins of human reason. On the contrary, it disdains not to receive reason as its friend and ally, and occasionally to elucidate and confirm both its doctrines and its precepts, by such collateral arguments as that faculty is capable of supplying. In the present case more especially, the consideration of a future state is a subject so full of comfort and satisfaction, that the mind of man must necessarily love to dwell upon it; must wish to contemplate it in every point of view; to examine it in every light, whether natural or revealed; to let in conviction from every quarter; and must be soothed and delighted to find, that so important an article of belief, on which so much depends both in this life and the next, is perfectly conformable to the natural sentiments of the human heart, and the justest conclusions of the human understanding. This must be the case, even with the sin-

cerest believers. But there are some also (as is but too well known) in every Christian country, who are *not* believers, and yet profess to receive, on the principles of natural religion, the doctrine of another life, and a day of recompense. Now, no one, I think, would wish to deprive even these of their persuasion, on whatever grounds it rests, that they are formed for immortality, and that they are responsible for their conduct here, at the bar of their Creator hereafter. There are other unbelievers (for they are divided into many different sects) who, though not yet convinced of a future state of existence, are willing to listen to the natural and moral evidences in its favour, and to no others. These, surely, it is of great importance, both to society and to themselves, to bring, if possible, to the acknowledgment of a future retribution. This acknowledgment will, even on their own principles, bind them down to a course of action very different from that which a contrary persuasion would have been apt to produce; and will, moreover, in all probability, pave the way for their *entire belief* of a religion which

they will find so perfectly harmonizing with their favourite oracle, Reason, in this most interesting point, and which professes to give them the most authentic information concerning that unseen world, the reality of which they already admit to have been proved. *

Whereas if, on the contrary, with a view of converting the infidel to Christianity, and impressing him with a high sense of its dignity and importance, you set out with assuring him that reason gives us not the slightest hope of immortality; that soul and body perish together in the grave, but are both raised to life again at that general resurrection which the Gospel promises; he will assent probably, without scruple, to the former part of your proposition, but will never be persuaded, on the sole authority of a Revelation which he rejects, to listen to the concluding part.

It may therefore contribute not a little, both to the satisfaction of the Christian, and the conviction of the unbeliever, to state,

* That fundamental doctrine of religion (a future state) would, if believed, open and dispose the mind seriously to attend *to the general evidence of the whole*.—Butler's Anal. c. i.

in the first place, with as much brevity and perspicuity as the nature of the inquiry will admit, some of the plainest and most obvious of those proofs of a future existence, which our own reason is capable of suggesting to the mind, and then to proceed to those which arise from the Christian Revelation. *

The first question that naturally presents itself on this subject, is, whether that percipient and thinking agent within us, which

* The substance of this and the two following Sermons was written and preached several years ago. The discourse now before us is not, I confess, of that kind which I should have selected for publication. But the progress which the doctrine of *materialism* has already made on the Continent, and is now endeavouring to make in this Kingdom, induced me to think, that a compendious view of the most intelligible arguments for the immateriality and natural immortality of the soul, as well as of the other principal evidences of a future state, both moral and scriptural, would not be at this time either unseasonable or unuseful. The *young reader*, at least, for whose use these three discourses were principally intended, will here find (what can alone be expected, on so extensive a subject, in so short a compass,) some general and leading principles to direct his judgment on a question of no small importance; to guard him against too hasty a desertion of the received opinion concerning it; and to prepare him for a more profound and accurate investigation of it, if ever he should feel himself disposed to pursue the inquiry any farther.

we usually call THE SOUL, is only a part of the body, or whether it is something totally distinct from it? If the former, it must necessarily share the extinction of the body by death; and there is an end at once of all our natural hopes of immortality. If, on the other hand, the latter supposition of its distinct subsistence be the true one; it is plain that there will then be no reason to presume, that the intellectual and the corporeal part of our frame must perish together. That fatal stroke which deprives the latter of life and motion, may have no other effect on the former, than that of dislodging it from its present *earthly tabernacle*, and introducing it into a different state of existence in another world.

Now, whatever difference of opinion there may have been among speculative men, either ancient or modern, concerning the specific nature of the human soul; yet in this they have all, with very few exceptions, universally agreed, that *it is a substance in itself, actually distinct and separable from the body*, though in its present state closely united with it. This has been the invariable

opinion of almost all mankind, learned or unlearned, civilized or savage, Christian or Pagan, in every age and nation of the world. There is scarce any one truth that can be named, which has met with so general a reception as this. We discover it in the earliest authors extant, both poets and historians; and it was maintained by every philosopher among the ancients (except by Anaximander, Democritus, and their followers*) as well as by all the primitive Christian writers, without, I believe, a single exception. Even they who supposed the soul to be material (which was undoubtedly supposed by several Pagan philosophers, as well as by two or three of the Christian fathers)

* See Cudworth's Intellectual System, vol. i. b. i. c. 1. & 2. and c. 5. p. 836—841.

Cicero (Tusc. Quæst. l. i. c. 22.) mentions no more than two philosophers, Dicæarchus and Aristoxenus, who maintained that man had no soul; and he gives their reason for this opinion—*quia difficilis erat animi quid & qualis sit intelligentia.* This principle, if carried to its full extent, would, I am afraid, prove equally that we have no bodies; because, as the greatest of our philosophers, Newton, Locke, &c. have repeatedly asserted, it is full as difficult to comprehend the nature of a *corporeal* as of an *incorporeal* substance. Yet this principle seems still to have no small weight with the patrons of Materialism.

yet uniformly held it to be a substance *distinct from the body.* They supposed it to be air, or fire, or harmony, or a fifth essence, or something of a finer, purer, more æthereal, texture than gross matter; and many of them conceived it also to be immortal, or capable of becoming so. Nor was it only the polished and enlightened nations of Greece and Rome, of Egypt and Asia, that believed man to be a compound being, consisting of two separate substances, but even the rudest and most barbarous tribes, of whom history has preserved any traces. And it is well known, that wherever curiosity, commerce, or the spirit of adventure has extended modern discoveries, this notion has been found existing. It has been found as prevalent throughout the vast continents of India and America, and the various islands of the Atlantic Ocean, and the southern hemisphere, as in every other quarter of the globe.* So general a suffrage of almost the whole human race, in favour of this opinion, is surely a very strong presumption of its truth. It proves it to be no

* See all the late voyages to those parts, by Captain Cook, and other navigators.

less conformable to the first natural apprehensions of the untutored mind, than to the soundest principles of philosophy.* And it will, I apprehend, receive no small confirmation from considering some of the more remarkable operations of the soul itself.

It is evident, that the intellectual part of our frame exercises a superintending and sovereign command over the body. It moves, directs, controls, supports, protects, and governs the whole corporeal system. Now, in other cases, we see that the MOVING POWER is something different from the MACHINE it actuates. We are therefore led by analogy to conclude, that the soul is as distinct from the body, as the force of gravity is from the clock which it sets in motion, or the wind that fills the sails, and the pilot that sits at the helm, from the vessel which the one steers and the other impels.

And indeed the soul itself gives, in various instances, very strong indications that this is actually the case. That power which it sometimes exerts, when immersed in pro-

* Omni in re consensio omnium gentium LEX NATURÆ putanda est. Tusca. Quæst. l. i.

found thought, of abstracting itself, of being *absent* as it were from the body, and paying no regard to the impressions made upon it by external objects; that authority by which it corrects and overrules the reports made to it by the senses, for which it frequently substitutes the conclusions of its own judgment; that facility with which, by turning the mental eye inward, and contemplating itself and all its wonderful operations, in the management of its internal stores, it forms a new set of ideas peculiarly its own, purely intellectual and spiritual*; that vigour which it sometimes manifests in the most excruciating disorders, and even at the approach of death, when its earthly tenement is all shattered and decayed; the essential difference there is between the pains and pleasures of the body and of the mind; the emotions often raised in us, without any external impression, by the eminent virtues of great and good men, in distant ages and countries; the astonishing activity and vivacity, the fertility of invention, and rapidity of transition, which the soul frequently dis-

* Locke, b. ii. ch. 1. s. 4.

plays in dreams, when the body, and all its senses and powers, are benumbed and locked up in sleep; the variety of unexpected scenes which it then, by a kind of enchantment, raises up to view; the strange and unheard-of persons, places, incidents, and conversations, it sometimes creates, totally unconnected with any occurrences of the preceding day; and of which not the smallest traces are to be found in the memory; and above all, that astonishing, yet well-attested phenomenon of SLEEP-WALKING, where, though the eyes are insensible to all external impressions, and sometimes entirely closed, yet the SOMNAMBULIST directs himself with unerring certainty through the most intricate windings, and over the most dangerous precipices, and without any apparent assistance from the organs of sense, has been known to read, write, and compose*; all these circumstances taken together must be allowed to form a very strong accumulation of evidence, that our thinking part is something more than *mere organical mechanism*, some-

* See a most extraordinary and well-authenticated instance of this in the Encyclopedie, article *Somnambule.*

thing, in short, *distinct* and capable of acting *separately* from our corporeal frame. *

It is true, indeed, there are many cases in which the mind appears to be considerably affected by the state and circumstances of the body. But all these appearances will admit as easy a solution from the hypothesis of two distinct essences, closely united, and powerfully sympathizing with each other, as from the supposition of our being one single, simple, uncompounded, homogeneous substance.

If then the preceding remarks have rendered it highly probable that we are endued with a principle of perception distinct from the body; the main point respecting the capacity of the soul to survive the grave is established; and, although it may be extremely useful and satisfactory to the mind, yet it is

* Even *one* of the many circumstances here collected together, viz. the vigour and vivacity which the mind frequently displays, when the body is almost worn out with pain, sickness, and old age, had force enough to convince a celebrated wit, infidel, and libertine of the last century, (but who afterwards became a sincere convert to Christianity,) that the soul was a substance totally distinct from the body. See *Bp. Burnet's Account of Lord Rochester*, 5th ed. pp. 20, 21.

not *absolutely essential to the argument*, to prove that the soul is formed of a *different kind of substance* from the body, or in other words, that it is *immaterial*. For even granting for a moment (what I trust will very soon appear to be inadmissible) that it is nothing more than a system of organized matter; yet, since it is, by the supposition, distinct from the body, it does by no means follow, that when the body dies, the sentient system will also be dissolved and perish. The same Almighty Being that could superadd to dead matter, so extraordinary and so unlikely a power as that of thought, could also, if he pleased, with precisely the same ease, supperadd to it the still further power of surviving the grave. A *material* soul therefore, may still, for any thing we know to the contrary, be an *immortal* one. But at the same time, it must be confessed, an incorporeal essence bids so much fairer for immortality, and is withal an opinion which has so much better grounds to support it, that I shall entreat your patience, while I just touch as concisely as possible on a few of the principal arguments which are usually adduced in favour of this doctrine.

It has been repeatedly shown, by some of the ablest philosophers and metaphysicians, that the complex nature, the divisibility, and the inertness of matter, are totally inconsistent with perception, thought, consciousness, spontaneous motion, and all the other active and simple powers which evidently distinguish our mental part; that all the possible arrangements, combinations, and modifications of figure and motion, can generate nothing but figure and motion, and that it is just as credible, that the union of a taste and a colour should produce a sound, as that any thing so totally remote from all resemblance to the properties of body, as intelligence plainly is, should result from the mechanical operations of any corporeal system, however curiously contrived, disposed, or organized.

Arguments of this kind, if unfolded and pursued to their full extent, would afford very satisfactory proofs of an incorporeal percipient. But I forbear leading you farther into such discussions; not only because they are unsuitable to this place, and would bewilder us in an endless labyrinth of minute

and abstruse investigations, but also for this plain reason; because, after all, it might be said, that, although perception and reflection cannot perhaps be the *natural result* of mere matter and motion, yet God certainly may, if he thinks fit, *supernaturally* annex them to a system of organized matter, such as the medullary substance of the brain probably is.

Now it would undoubtedly be presumptuous in man to decide with peremptory boldness, what is, or is not, possible for his Creator to do, and to prescribe bounds to his almighty power; but this much we may be allowed to say, that Omnipotence itself cannot work a contradiction; and to our weak apprehensions it has very much the *appearance* of a contradiction, to ingraft self-motion, activity, intelligence, volition, consciousness, simplicity, and indivisibility, on a dead clod of earth; on a substance, which, if we may either credit our senses, or the sentiments of the most eminent philosophers, is a solid, extended, compound, divisible mass, incapable of changing its own state, and making resistance

to motion. * For, refine and subtilize matter as much as you please, yet still it must retain its essential characteristic properties; and it is not very credible that it should have two different sets of properties belonging to it, equally essential, and diametrically opposite to each other. Of such an union as this, we have no instance in nature, nor is there any analogy that can lead us to expect it, or think it possible. Nothing less, one should think, could induce any one to adopt so harsh a conclusion, than the *clearest and most decisive evidence* that there cannot possibly be any

* The reader will perceive that here, and in other parts of this discourse, I adhere to the received opinion of the *solidity*, *impenetrability*, and *vis inertiæ* of matter. At the same time I am not ignorant that it has of late been controverted, and a very different system advanced, by men of considerable ability. But, notwithstanding the great ingenuity of their arguments, I must confess myself not very willing to abandon the principles of such men as Locke, Clarke, Newton, Maclaurin, &c. &c.; and perhaps the intelligent reader will be disposed to think this attachment to old opinions something more than early prejudice, when he has perused with care *M. De Luc's Lettres Morales et Physiques, Tom.* i. *D.* 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.; where he will find this very abstruse question discussed, and in my conception decided, with a truly philosophical penetration, clearness, and precision.

such thing as an immaterial substance. But so far is this from being capable of proof, that the actual existence of such substances is a truth which rests on the highest authority, and is supported by arguments which have never yet been overthrown.

In the very first dawn of philosophy, two sorts of substances, essentially different from each other, were supposed to exist, which were distinguished by the names of MIND and BODY. This distinction was expressly maintained by Plato, Aristotle, and almost all the ancient Theists, from Thales down to Seneca. Many of them held also that BODY, or MATTER, was in its own nature essentially passive, inert, and incapable of moving itself, and that the only active power in the universe was mind, or incorporeal substance.* This great principle they supposed to be

* Ἱκανωτατα δεδειχται ψυχη των παντων πρεσβυτατη, γινομενων τε αρχη κινησεως. *Plato de Leg. l.* x. *p.* 952. *Ed. Fic.*

Της μεν ὑλης το πασχειν εςι και το κινεισθαι· το δε κινειν και το ποιειν ἑτερας δυναμεως. *Aristotle de Gen. & Corrupt. l.* ii. *c.* 9. *p.* 407. *See also Phys. l.* viii. *c.* 5. *p.* 325., *and Metaphys. l.* xii. *c.* 7. *p.* 741. And in his book de Anim. l. i. c. 2. he gives the opinions of several ancient philosophers concerning MIND, of whom the greater part agree in making it the principle of motion.

diffused through every part of nature*; they conceived it to be the immediate cause of vegetation, animal life, and intelligence, and they seem to have thought it impossible that there ever should have been any such thing as motion in the world, had there never been any substance existing in it but matter. †

This idea, instead of being reprobated by the wonderful discoveries and superior lights of modern philosophy, receives, on the contrary, the amplest confirmation from them. It is well known to be an established principle of this philosophy, to be laid down as

* See those well-known and beautiful lines in Virgil: *Principio cœlum et terras, &c. Æn. l.* vi. *v.* 724. And again, *Deum namque ire per omnes, &c. Georg.* iv. *v.* 221.

† On these principles of the ancient philosophy, is founded the PLASTIC NATURE of the profound and learned Cudworth; and also that hypothesis of the universal dominion of MIND, and the existence *of a distinct internal active principle* in every part of nature (not excepting even inanimate substances), which is maintained by the very ingenious author of a book lately published, intitled *Ancient Metaphysics*. This system, few, I conceive, will be disposed to admit in all its extent; but yet the lovers of ancient learning and philosophy will receive from it much curious information; and the advocates for immaterialism will find in it some new arguments for that doctrine well worthy their attention.

the first and fundamental law of nature, that matter is in itself *perfectly inactive*, and incapable of changing the state it happens to be in, whether of motion or of rest; and that consequently all the motion now in the world (unless you suppose it to have been eternal) must have derived its origin from *an immaterial agent*. Nor is this all. Some of the most illustrious disciples of the Newtonian school contend further, that not only the *origin* of motion, but the *continuance* of it also, requires the perpetual agency of something different from, and superior to, matter. They think it clear to demonstration, that all the great movements of the universe are both produced and carried on by the unremitted exertions of *some immaterial power*; and that the existence and operation of such a power is not only probable but certain, and even absolutely necessary for the preservation of the course and order of nature.* The great Author

* See Clarke's Dem. p. 74. D°.'s Evid. of Nat. and Rev. Religion. pp. 14. 22. 10th ed. And Maclaurin's Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy, b. iv. c. 9. s. 12, 13. p. 387.

Add to this, what has been asserted, and I think proved, by writers of considerable eminence, that the properties of

of nature himself is confessedly an *incorporeal* Being. He was acknowledged to be so by the most sagacious of the ancient metaphysicians *; and the most celebrated of the modern, not only thought that the immateriality of the Supreme Being was demonstrable, but that he had himself demonstrated it. †

Assuming it therefore as an undoubted truth, that there is *one* incorporeal Being at least in the world, it follows that there *may be more.* And when we consider by what gradual and easy steps the scale of existence ascends from inanimate matter up to man; and what an infinite number of creatures of

---

corpuscular attraction and repulsion, observable in all material substance, and appealed to sometimes as proofs of their activity, are not powers inherent in the substances themselves (which in that case must, in contradiction to an established rule in philosophy, *act where they are not*, that is, at a distance from their own surfaces) but the effects of *some active principle*, entirely distinct and essentially different from matter. Sir Isaac Newton himself seems to have had some idea of this kind in his thoughts. Optics, 2d ed. p. 376, 377.

* Arist. Metaph. l. xii. c. 7. p. 742., and Περι Ζηνωνος, p. 944. Nec vero Deus ipse alio modo intelligi potest, nisi mens soluta quædam & libera. Tus. Quæst. l. i. c. 27.

† Mr. Locke's Essay on Hum. Und. b. iv. c. 3. s. 6.; note, p. 167.; and b. iv. c. 10. pp. 245. 250.

different orders and properties are comprehended within these limits, it is very natural to conclude, that in the invisible world above us, in the immeasurable distance between us and the FATHER OF SPIRITS, there is a far longer series and progression of spiritual beings, each rising above the other in purity and perfection, than of material substances below us. This idea of the invisible world is well suited to our conceptions of the wisdom, power, and goodness of our Almighty Creator, and to that grandeur, regularity, order, and harmony, which reign throughout the universe. *

Let us now see the result of this enquiry. It may be drawn into a verry narrow compass.

It appears that there are the best grounds for asserting, not only the *possible*, but the *actual*, existence of INCORPOREAL SUBSTANCES.

It is certain also, that such substances are capable of active and intellectual powers; for of such powers, infinitely exalted, is the Supreme Being himself possessed.

* Essay on Hum. Und. b. iii. c. 6. s. 12.

At the same time, we see around us *other* substances of a very different nature, which we call *material or corporeal;* and which not only evidently appear to our senses to be inert, sluggish, passive bodies, utterly void of sensation, intelligence, and spontaneous motion, but have, by the most diligent inquirers into nature, been pronounced absolutely incapable of those properties.

Now to one of these two classes of substances must that active, lively, conscious, thinking, reflecting power within us, which we call the SOUL, belong. Let reason; let the common sense of mankind determine which of them it is.

On this short simple issue must the question before us ultimately rest. We leave it to every man to decide for himself, and a plain unbiassed understanding cannot decide wrong.

Difficulties, it must be allowed, there are, attending even the most probable of these two opinions, that of an immaterial soul. But in the apprehension of most men, I believe, they are not to be compared with those that encumber the contrary system. To suppose that the human mind, with all its wonderful faculties and powers, is formed

of materials essentially the same with the pebble we tread under our feet; and that a mass of lead, if properly organized, is capable of the sublimest flights of imagination, and of all the various attainments and exertions of the most active, vigorous, and comprehensive understanding; is surely more repugnant to the natural conceptions of mankind, and does more violence to the very first principles of what has been hitherto deemed the soundest philosophy, than any difficulties that may embarrass the doctrine of an incorporeal percipient. Even Mr. Locke himself, who had certainly no unreasonable prejudices against the capacities of matter, and must therefore be allowed to be a very impartial as well as a very able judge of the point now before us; even he, after maturely weighing the arguments and objections on both sides of the question, acknowledges it to be *in the highest degree probable*, that the soul of man is *immaterial.**

* *Essay on Hum. Und. b.* iv. *c.* 3. *s.* 6. *Note, p.* 141. *and p.* 143. Whilst I know, by seeing or hearing, &c. that there is some corporeal being without me, the object of that sensation, I do *more certainly know*, that there is some *spiritual being* within me, that sees and hears. This I must be convinced *cannot be* the action of bare insensible matter; *nor ever could be, without an immaterial thinking being. Ib. b.* xi. *ch.* 23. *s.* 15. *p.* 259.

We may therefore safely venture to pronounce this opinion to be most consonant to reason and philosophy, as well as to the most received notions of mankind. The necessary consequence of this is, that man is *a compound being*, consisting of a material body, and an immaterial soul, intimately and vitally united together; each preserving its own powers and attributes distinct, yet acting in perfect concord and harmony with each other. In what manner, and by what means, they are so united, and how two such dissimilar substances can reciprocally influence and act upon each other, is indeed more than we are able to comprehend. But this can never be justly urged against the reality of such an union, unless it be laid down as a maxim in philosophy, that the strength or weakness of our conceptions is the measure of truth and falsehood, and that every thing which we do not perfectly understand is therefore impossible. We can just as easily conceive the connexion and mutual influence of soul and body, as we can explain how the minute component particles of matter cohere so firmly together,

as to form what we call solid extension; how the whole process of vegetation is carried on through all its successive stages; how the food of animals is converted into nutriment, and contributes to their support and growth; how finite matter can be infinitely divisible; and how two mathematical lines, indefinitely produced, can be for ever approaching each other, and yet never meet.* When these, and a thousand other truths, equally incomprehensible, yet incontrovertible, in almost every branch of science, and every part of nature, are made perfectly clear and intelligible, it will then be time enough to show how the soul and body are linked together, and rendered capable of acting on each other.

In the mean while it is evident, that in the wide range of creation there was sufficient

* Nous ne savons ni comment nous recevons la vie, ni comment nous la donnons, ni comment nous croissons, ni comment nous digérons, ni comment nous dormons, ni comment nous pensons, ni comment nous sentons. Notre nature, celle de l'univers, celle de la moindre plante, tout est plongé pour nous dans un gouffre de tenebres. *Voltaire. Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, article *Ame*, p. 176. 190. —— Is it not astonishing that a man who could thus frankly acknowledge the inscrutable mysteries of nature, in almost every part of the universe, should yet object to and ridicule the mysteries of Revelation, and consider them as an insuperable bar to the belief of it?

room for such a combination as this; and, reasoning from analogy, it was natural to suppose that there should be, somewhere or other, such a complex being as man, composed of a material body and an immaterial soul, and thus uniting together the visible and invisible world; just as, in the various orders and gradations of beings ascending up to man, we see that in passing from one class of existence to another, there is always some one species that seems to partake of the nature of both: which is, as it were, the link that ties them together, and forms the common boundary between inanimate matter and vegetation; between vegetation and animal life; between animal life and intellect.

This union then of the two constituent parts of the human frame subsists till it is dissolved by death; which we have no reason to think can have any other effect upon the soul, than that of disuniting it from the body. For the former is, as we have seen, a sentient principle totally distinct from the latter. It *may* therefore continue to exist, and to think when the body is reduced to dust; and if it be moreover (as we have shown to be highly

probable) incorporeal, it cannot be subject to that decomposition of parts which occasions the dissolution of the body. Our whole corporeal frame undergoes, we know, an entire change, probably more than once, during the course of our lives; yet the soul continues all the while invariably the same. Why then may it not also survive, unaltered, that total change of the body, which is occasioned *all at once* by death, as well as the *gradual* one which is produced by other causes? The presumption most certainly is, that it will, unless any proof of the contrary can be given, which I conceive it will not be very easy to do. * Our Almighty Creator may undoubtedly, if he thinks fit, by an extraordinary act of his power, put a period even to our immaterial part, when its frail companion dies. But there is no imaginable reason for supposing that he will. The body itself is not totally destroyed by death. It is only reduced to a different state of existence. It loses life and motion, and its organical mechanism is broken in pieces; but its component elementary materials still remain;

* See Butler's Analogy, c. 1.

and there is no instance, as far as we know, of any one particle of matter being annihilated throughout the universe. Why, then, should we imagine that the soul will, after its separation from the body, be deprived of all existence, when nothing else in nature is? To assert, as Lucretius and others have done*, that it cannot exist, or retain perception, thought, and reason, without the assistance of the body, and the organs of sense, is a conclusion too unphilosophical for the present age to admit. In this visible world, indeed, and the state of existence here assigned to the soul, the concurrence and assistance of a certain system of organized matter are rendered necessary for carrying on, and producing to view its various operations. But to infer from hence, that such a system will also be indispensably necessary in *another* state, in that invisible world which immediately succeeds this, and where there may be various modes of existence totally unknown to us at present, is to

* *Lucretius, l.* iii. *v.* 559. *and* 631. Neque aliud est quidquam, cur incredibilis his videatur animorum æternitas, nisi quod nequeunt, *qualis animus sit vacans corpore intelligere. Tusc. Quæst. l.* i. *c.* 22.

affirm, what no human being (unless, like St. Paul, he has been caught up into the third heaven) can possibly prove. On the contrary, it has been shown, that the actual existence of such a thing as an immaterial, *unembodied*, intellectual essence, is so far from involving any contradiction, that it is by many thought to be *demonstrable*.*

The very nature, then, of the human soul itself, as far as we are capable of comprehending it, gives us the strongest ground to believe that it is immortal. But it ought at the same time to be observed, and it is an observation of great importance in this question, that although the supposition of an immaterial soul surviving the dissolution of the body is, as we have seen, a doctrine in the highest degree probable, and undoubtedly adds no small credibility and force to the other evidences of a future state; yet the great proofs, the great *natural* and *moral* proofs, I mean, (for to these only our present inquiries extend) of this most comfortable truth, rest on quite a different foundation; on that firm and immoveable

* See above, p. 111.

foundation, *the belief of a moral governor of the universe*, infinite in wisdom, justice, goodness, and power. A Being such as this, let the nature of the human soul be what it will, can raise it if he pleases, from any supposable situation after death, to another state of existence, and restore to it that perception of its identity, that consciousness of its former sentiments and conduct, which will render it a proper subject of punishment or reward. Should it therefore appear (as in the two following discourses I trust it will) that from considering the nature and attributes of God, the faculties of man, and the constitution of the world in which he is placed, there are the best grounds for believing that he is *an accountable being*, we may rest assured, that of *whatever materials* his sentient part is composed, Omnipotence will not want the means of placing him hereafter in an *accountable state.*

SERMON VI.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT: BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.

THE arguments advanced in the foregoing discourse, are, I conceive, sufficient to show, that, as far as we are able to comprehend the nature of the human soul, we have reason to conclude it is a distinct and an immaterial substance, and of course capable of surviving the dissolution of the body. But these, as I have already observed, are far from being the only or the most decisive proofs of a future existence. There are other still plainer and more satisfactory evidences of that important truth, discoverable even by the light of nature, which I shall now proceed to open and lay before you.

I. Consider, in the first place, the many excellent faculties of the human soul; the imagination, memory, reason, judgment, will; the vast variety and rapidity of its operations; the power it has of receiving such a multitude of ideas from external objects; of depositing them in the storehouse of the memory for many years; of drawing them out again for use whenever it thinks fit; of comparing, arranging, combining, and diversifying them in such an infinite number of ways; of reflecting, meditating, and reasoning upon them; of comprehending such a prodigious number of different arts and sciences; of creating the exquisite beauties and refined delights of music, painting, and poetry; of carrying on, through a long train of dependent propositions, the most abstruse and intricate speculations; of extracting, from a few plain, self-evident axioms, a demonstration of the most sublime and astonishing truths; of penetrating into every part of the material, the vegetable, the animal, the intellectual world; of conceiving and executing so many wise and beneficial designs; of turning its

eye inward upon itself; of observing and regulating its own movements; of refining, purifying, and exalting its affections; of bringing itself, by a proper course of discipline and self-government, to bear with patience the acutest pains and the heaviest afflictions; to face with intrepidity the greatest dangers; to restrain its strongest passions; to resist the most inviting temptations; to exert, upon occasion, the most heroic fortitude; to renounce, for the sake of conscience and of duty, all that this world has to give; to abstract itself from all earthly enjoyments; to live as it were out of the body; to carry its views and hopes to the remotest futurity, and raise itself to the contemplation and the love of divine and spiritual things. Consider, now, whether it be probable, that a being possessed of such astonishing powers as these, should be designed for this life only; should be sent so richly furnished into the world merely to live a few years in anxiety and misery, and then to perish for ever? Is it credible, is it possible, that the mighty soul of a Newton should share exactly the same fate with the vilest insect that crawls upon the ground; that, after having laid open the

mysteries of nature, and pushed its discoveries almost to the very boundaries of the universe, it should on a sudden have all its lights at once extinguished, and sink into everlasting darkness and insensibility? To what purpose all this waste and profusion of talents, if their operation is to be limited to this short period of existence? Why are we made so like immortal beings, if mortality is to be our lot? What need was there, that this little vessel of ours should be fitted out and provided with stores sufficient to carry it through the vast ocean of eternity, if, at the same time, its voyage was meant to be confined within the narrow straits of the present life? Instinct would have served for this purpose as well as reason; would have conducted us through the world with as much safety, and with less pain, than all our boasted intellectual endowments.

II. Another presumption in favour of a future state, is *the perpetual progress of the soul towards perfection*, and its endless capacity of further improvements and larger acquisitions. This argument has been set in so strong and beautiful a light, by one of our

finest writers*, that it is hardly possible to do justice to it in any other words than his own. "A brute," says he, "arrives at a point of perfection, which he can never pass. In a few years, he has all the endowments he is capable of, and were he to live ten thousand more he would be the same thing he is at present. Were a human soul thus at a stand in her accomplishments; were her faculties full blown and incapable of further enlargement; I could imagine she might fall away insensibly, and then drop at once into a state of annihilation. But who can believe that a thinking being, which is in a perpetual progress of improvements, and travelling on from perfection to perfection, must perish at her first setting out, and be stopped short in the very beginning of her inquiries? Death overtakes her, while there is yet an unbounded prospect of knowledge open to her view, whilst the conquest over her passions is still incomplete, and much is still wanted of that perfect standard of virtue, which she is always aiming at, but can never reach. Would an infinitely wise Being create

* Mr. Addison.

such glorious creatures for so mean a purpose; or can he delight in the production of such abortive intelligences? Would he give us talents, which are never fully to be exerted, and capacities which are never to be filled? Is it not far more reasonable to suppose, that man is not sent into the world merely to propagate his kind; to provide himself with a successor, and then to quit his post: but, that those short-lived generations of rational creatures, which rise up and disappear in such quick succession, are only to receive their first rudiments of existence here, and then to be transplanted to some more friendly climate, where they may spread and flourish; where they may go on from strength to strength; where they may shine for ever with new accessions of glory, and brighten to all eternity?"*

III. There is, in the human mind, *a constant and a natural tendency towards futurity.* Our thoughts are perpetually wandering from the present moment, and looking

* *Spectator.* No. 111. The whole of this inimitable paper (of which the substance only, with a few variations, is here given) is highly worthy of the attention of the reader.

forwards to something that is to take place hereafter. Be our happiness ever so great, yet it is not sufficient to gratify and content the soul. There is always a void left in it, which can never be filled up without calling in the aid of futurity, without the anticipation of something more than we at present possess. Whatever may chance to be our ruling passion, whether it be the love of wealth, of power, of honour, of pleasure, we are scarce ever satisfied with that share of it which we enjoy; but are always thirsting and reaching after more, are perpetually forming projects from which we promise ourselves greater satisfaction than any we have yet experienced. There is constantly some favourite object in view, some point to be obtained; and "we are continually hurrying over some period of our existence, in order to arrive at certain imaginary stations or resting-places," where we hope to find that quiet and content which has hitherto eluded our search. We reach those wished-for situations, but "we find no rest for the "sole of our feet."* The imaginary horizon

* Gen. viii. 9.

of our project flies before us as we advance; no sooner do we gain one eminence, than another instantly appears beyond it; and when that is passed, still others present themselves in endless succession to our view. Thus are we continually drawn on through life with the same delusive expectations. We live upon the future, though the future constantly deceives us; we continue grasping at distant happiness, though it always escapes out of our hands, and go on to the very end, pressing forward towards some imagined good, with the same eagerness and alacrity as if we had never suffered the least disappointment in our pursuit.

There are two other passions, that respect *futurity*, belonging to our constitution, no less remarkable; and these are, *the love of life*, and *the desire of fame*. The former of these is common to all mankind. There is a natural dread of extinction planted in every human breast. The soul shrinks back with horror from the thoughts of annihilation. It cannot bear the idea of sinking into nothing, and sharing the fate of that body which it used to animate and inform. There

may indeed be some men so profligate as to please themselves with the thought of having their whole existence terminated in the grave, and of renouncing all expectation of a future reviviscence. But the reason of this is, not because they have no desire to continue in being, but because they dread *non*-existence less than a *miserable* existence, which, if there be another state, they are sure must be their lot. It is this fear which overrules their natural love of life. Take away this, and they would be as averse to annihilation as the rest of mankind.*

Akin to this desire of continuing our existence, is the desire of continuing our memory beyond the grave. This was the chief source of all those noble, disinterested, and public-spirited actions, which we admire so much in some of the ancient Pagans. *We*, indeed, *who know*, that "if our earthly "house of this tabernacle were dissolved,

* This dread of extinction, and passionate love of life, seem to have operated with surprising force on the minds of the ancients, and are expressed by them sometimes in the strongest and most emphatical terms. That famous wish of Mæcenas, *Debilem facito manu, &c.* which Seneca, who quotes it, justly calls, *Turpissimum votum*, is not the only instance of this kind. Vide Senec. Ep. 101. and Lipsius's notes on the passage,

" we have a building of God, a house not " made with hands, eternal in the heavens*," and that consequently our name is not the only part of us that shall escape the hand of death, have much higher and more powerful incentives to virtuous conduct than the prospect of an ideal immortality. Yet still, ideal as it is, and utterly unworthy to be compared with that substantial and truly glorious eternity which is reserved for us in the heavens, it has notwithstanding no small influence upon our hearts. Nor is this the case only with men of exalted minds and cultivated understandings, but in some degree even with the lowest and most ignorant of mankind. Almost every one is desirous of leaving a reputable character behind him, of being celebrated after he is gone, by the little circle of his friends, for his good sense or his good humour, his charity or hospitality, his honesty or fidelity; and every churchyard we see is full of the little artifices of humble ambition to secure some small portion of posthumous renown. There are perhaps a few, who, during their lives

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

may be, or seem to be, indifferent as to the judgment of posterity concerning them. But yet even these, when they are on the point of leaving the world, are commonly as solicitous as any others to clear up any thing that affects their character, and to guard their memories with all the care they can against misrepresentation and calumny. Although they may have no desire of a *great* name, yet they cannot forbear wishing to have a *good* one, or at least not to have a *bad* one; a clear proof that they are far from being unconcerned about their future reputation. We may therefore safely affirm, that the love of fame is in some degree or other universal. We are almost all influenced by it to do things from which we can reap no present credit or advantage, and of which, perhaps, the world will know nothing till after our decease. When our own times are unjust to us, we appeal to future ages for redress; and we have always some kind friend on whose care and tenderness we rely for the vindication of our conduct, if it should stand in need of it when we are gone.

Taking then together all that has been

said on this strong *leaning of the soul towards futurity*; its constant dissatisfaction with present enjoyments, and incessant pursuit of distant happiness; its strong desire of life and immortality, and its fondness for the good-will and applause of posterity; what shall we infer from this remarkable construction of the human mind? Has a wise and a good God furnished us with desires which have no correspondent objects, and raised expectations in our breasts with no other view but to disappoint them? Are we to be for ever in search of happiness, without arriving at it, either in this world or the next? Are we formed with a passionate longing for immortality, and yet destined to perish after this short period of existence? Are we prompted to the noblest actions, and supported through life, under the severest hardships and most delicate temptations, by the hopes of a reward which is visionary and chimerical, by the expectation of praises, of which it is utterly impossible for us ever to have the least knowledge or enjoyment?* These

* It was evidently the opinion of the excellent Archbishop Secker, that we shall in another state be sensible of the regard

suppositions are utterly irreconcilable with our apprehensions of God's moral perfections, and his usual method of treating us. "It is not his way to lead us by illusions and deceits. He has not, in any other instance, given us natural propensities, which he knew at the same time there was no possibility of gratifying, nor filled us with unavoidable apprehensions of what should never come to pass." * Why then should we imagine that he has done so in the case before us, and in that only? Is it not infinitely more reasonable to conclude, that our appetite for immortality has, like all other appetites, its proper means of gratification; that the natural bent and tendency of the soul towards futurity is a plain indication, that to futurity it is consigned; that it is intended for another state of existence, where it will find that satisfaction it looks for here in vain; and where hope will at length be swallowed up in enjoyment?

---

shown to our characters by those who survive us. He has, I trust, already experienced the truth of his own doctrine. Few men had a greater interest in it than himself. See his Sermons, vol. vii. ser. xviii. pp. 403, 404.

* Clarke.

IV. The same conclusion follows from viewing man on the moral side. That variety of faculties with which he is endowed, and the circumstances in which he is placed, plainly prove him to be *an accountable being*. Human actions are evidently distinguishable into two sorts, between which there is an essential and unalterable difference. Some are naturally right and good, others naturally wrong and evil. God has impressed upon our minds a strong *internal sense* of this difference, together with an approbation of what is right, and a disapprobation of what is wrong. He has also given us reason to direct us, where natural sentiment happens to fail, and by the jiont operation of these two principles, he has clearly intimated to us what course of action he requires us to pursue. Hence arises a plain rule for the direction of our moral conduct. Appetite, passion, temptation, prompt us to transgress this rule; instinct, reason, interest, duty, lead us to conform to it. We have undeniably the power to choose which side we please; can either give way to irregular desires, or control and overrule them by superior

considerations. Now, if we were to suppose a being, purposely framed in such a manner as to be justly accountable for its proceedings, one cannot imagine any constitution better adapted to this end than that of man, which we have just described. And when to this you add, that there is a SUPERIOR who has a right to call him to an account, a Superior who gave him a rule to walk by, and to whom it cannot be indifferent whether he transgresses that rule or not; who can have a doubt, but that God will in some other state examine into the use he has made of his talents in this?

V. If, from considering man, we ascend to God, the evidence for a future state rises considerably in its importance and strength. If he is possessed of all those perfections which we usually and justly ascribe to him, he cannot but approve virtue and abhor vice, and cannot but give the plainest indications that he does so. His holiness must incline him to love and favour the good, to detest and discourage the bad. His justice must naturally lead him to distinguish between his faithful and his rebellious subjects, and

to make a wide difference in his respective treatment of them. His wisdom must prompt and his power enable him to assert the dignity of his government, and the authority of his laws, by rewarding those who observe, and punishing those who transgress them, in such a manner as to convince the whole world, that every human being shall be a gainer by obedience, and a loser by disobedience. Now it is a truth universally admitted, that the virtuous are *not* always rewarded, nor the vicious punished, in this world, agreeably to their deserts. For although the natural effect of virtue is happiness, and of vice misery; and although, in general, these effects do follow even here, yet in several instances they most evidently do not. We sometimes see men of the very worst principles and practices going on in a full tide of worldly prosperity, enjoying a large share of every thing this life has to give, riches, honours, rank, power, health of body and cheerfulness of mind, "coming in no "misfortune like other folk, and not "plagued" with cares and afflictions "like "other men." * On the other hand, we may

* Psalm lxxiii. 5.

observe but too often, that the best and worthiest of mankind are destined from their earliest years to struggle with the severest hardships and calamities; with poverty, disappointments, undutiful children, unkind friends, inveterate enemies, perhaps too with strong passions, constitutional distempers, and a depression of spirits, which embitters every enjoyment, and would render the most prosperous condition of life insupportable. Their principles too, and motives, are frequently misrepresented, their purest and most benevolent intentions rendered odious, and those actions which deserve the applause and admiration of mankind, expose them perhaps to the grossest obloquy, persecution, and distress. When the ancient Pagans beheld such instances as these, they cried out immediately, Where are the gods? Who will ever believe that Providence concerns itself in human affairs? Who indeed will believe it, if these disorders are permitted, without any notice taken of them here, or any intention to rectify them hereafter? Is it possible to conceive that the wise, and righteous, and all-powerful Governor of the universe, will

suffer his laws to be trampled under foot, his religion ridiculed and despised, his faithful servants calumniated, insulted, oppressed, and yet never once stretch forth his arm to chastise the bold, triumphant offender, and to recompense the injured helpless man; to vindicate his reputation in the eyes of all mankind; to make his "righteousness as "clear as the light, his just dealing as the "noonday;" and to make him ample amends in another life, for the indignities and afflictions he has undergone in this?

That such a retribution will actually take place, we shall have still further reason to conclude, if we consider,

VI. Sixthly, that the constitution of this world is exactly such as might be expected, if it was to be followed by another.

Supposing a future judgment to be a thing certain and allowed, it would then be natural to imagine, that our situation here would be such as should be a proper trial and probation, and preparation for that future judgment. Now this, we find, is actually the case. This life has every conceivable appearance of being a scene of *trial* and

probation, intended to fit and train us up, by a proper course of exercise and discipline, for another and a better state of existence. The faculties we are furnished with, and the constitution of the world we are placed in, precisely answer to this idea, and to no other. Good and evil are placed before us; we have a power of choosing which we please, and we know all the consequences of our choice. A system of affections is given us, to excite us to action; a variety of objects is distributed around, to work on these affections; we have oportunities of indulging, and we have motives for restraining them. We are allured by pleasure, by interest, by power, with no other view but to give proof of our moderation, our integrity, our disinterestedness. The provocations, injuries, and affronts we constantly meet with, are so many trials of our temper, forbearance, and placability; the afflictions and calamities of various kinds, which fall to our lot, are only instruments in the hands of Providence to exercise and improve our patience, fortitude, humility, meekness, resignation. Whatever road of life we take, obstructions and in-

conveniences, cares and difficulties, quickly start up before us, to oppose our progress, and to render necessary the utmost exertions of our prudence, circumspection, industry and perseverance. Even those irreligious and licentious writings that do so much mischief, give occasion, at the same time, to the friends of religion to manifest their zeal and their abilities in the defence of insulted decency and of divine truth. That unequal allotment also of worldly blessings, which is so constant a subject of discontent and complaint, is only a part of the same general plan of moral improvement and probationary discipline. The wealthy and the indigent, the high and the low, the powerful and the weak, are brought together on the same great theatre of action, in order to "provoke one another to good works," and to be the mutual instruments of drawing forth the good qualities suited to their respective stations. And in the same manner, throughout the whole intercourse of human life, the collision of opposite tempers, situations, employments, interests, passions, and pursuits, strikes out of our souls those

sparks of virtue, which would otherwise, probably, never have been called forth to view.*

It is a fact, then, which will admit of no dispute, that we are actually *tried*, here, almost every moment of our lives. We ourselves, in common speech, call our afflictions *trials*; and we feel, to our cost, that they are really so. If this be granted, it follows that this world is confessedly a *state of probation*; the necessary consequence of which is *a state of retribution*. For, it would be as absurd to suppose, that we should be tried, without being rewarded or punished, as that we should be rewarded or punished without giving any proofs that we deserve either. These two things are correlatives, and mutually infer each other. They are evidently parts of the same design, the beginning and the end of one wise plan of government, which we cannot suppose to be left imperfect or incomplete, without arraigning the wisdom and the justice of its divine Author. It is not his custom to do his work by halves. Whatever he enters upon he will accomplish. Every

* See Dr. Horbery's Sermons, D. 15.

thing we know of him, and his proceedings, convince us that he must, and he himself declares to all the world that he will. "When I begin," says he, "I will also "make an end."*

VII. Strong as these arguments are in themselves in favour of a future state, it is no small confirmation of them, that there has been a general propensity and inclination in almost all mankind, in every period and every country of the world, to believe the existence of the soul after death, and to entertain some notions, however imperfect and confused, of a future recompense. With regard to the ancient Heathens, we have the testimony of one of the greatest men amongst them †, that there was an universal agreement of all people upon the earth in this great point; and he makes this common consent one of his chief proofs of the immortality of the soul. And from that time to this, amidst all the discoveries that have been made, in every part of the globe, there has never yet, I believe, been found one single nation, however savage or barbarous, that has not had some apprehensions or suspicions of another

* 1 Sam. iii. 12. † Cicero, Tusc. Quæst. l. i.

state of being after this. Even those that are said (though but on very doubtful evidence) to have no notion of a Supreme Being, and to be destitute not only of religious principle, but also, in some respects, of moral sentiment; yet all concur in believing the existence of the soul after death.* It is true, indeed, that there were, among the ancient pagans, some sects of philosophers who doubted, and others who denied, a future retribution. But the number of these, in comparison of the whole class of the common people who believed it, was but small. And nothing ought to be concluded against the prevalence of a natural sentiment, from the fanciful notions of a few conceited sophists; whose pride it has ever been to show their ingenuity in combating the plainest truths merely because they *were* plain, and to check the voice of reason and of nature by perplexing subtleties, and un-

* See Locke's Essay on Hum. Und. b. i. c. 3. s. 9. Robertson's Hist. of America, b. iv. p. 389. Account of Voyages to the Southern Hemisphere, published by Hawkesworth, vol. ii. p. 236—239. 4to. 1st ed. Tillotson, Serm. 174. It is remarkable, that the immortality of the soul is believed by all the savage tribes of America, from one end of that immense continent to the other.

intelligible refinements. But the human understanding left to itself, and free from all artificial bias and constraint, has a very strong propensity to the belief of a future judgment. And, although in the notions both of the ancient Heathens, and of our modern savages, concerning it, there is great obscurity, uncertainty, and confusion, with a strange mixture of the most absurd and fabulous imaginations, so as to produce little or no effects upon their hearts and lives; yet still they all tend to evince the natural tendency of the human mind to this opinion. And the happy regions of the Thracian*, the sensual paradise of Mahomet, the Elysium of the Greeks, and the pleasant mountains of the Indians, all agree in one common principle, the continuation of our being after death, and the distribution of certain rewards and punishments in another life.

* See Herodotus, l. iv. p. 252. ed. Gronov.

SERMON VII.

MATTHEW XXV. 46.

AND THESE SHALL GO AWAY INTO EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT: BUT THE RIGHTEOUS INTO LIFE ETERNAL.

I HAVE now given you a general delineation of the natural and moral evidences for the immortality of the human soul, and a state of future recompense; and although each of them, singly considered, cannot be said to be absolutely conclusive, yet, when taken collectively, they amount to a very high degree of probability; a degree which would render it the extremity of folly for any one to act (which yet is but too common a case with those who reject Revelation) as if it was *a decided point*, that there is no state of existence but the present. How totally

opposite such an assumption would be to every dictate of nature and reason, will appear still more evident, if we now very briefly draw together into one point of view the several arguments that have been stated in the two preceding discourses, and then see how the case stands on the two contrary suppositions, that there *is*, and that there is *not*, a future state of retribution.

In the first place, then, if we admit that this life is the whole of our being, what a strange and unaccountable scene of things presents itself! We have in that case an active principle within us, which has every imaginable appearance of being distinct from the body, immaterial, indiscerptible, and indissoluble; yet it turns out to be nothing more than mere matter, endued with qualities diametrically opposite to its most essential properties; it is dissolved with the body, and loses all sensation, consciousness, and reflection for ever, in the grave.

We are evidently distinguished from, and raised above, the brutes, by a variety of astonishing faculties and powers, which seem plainly designed for some nobler scene

of action than this; yet with the brutes we perish, and all the rich endowments of our minds are wasted on us to no purpose.

We are daily making advances both in knowledge and virtue; we have a large field of improvement, both moral and intellectual, before our eyes; yet in the very midst of our progress we are stopped short by the hand of Death, and never reach that state of perfection of which we seem capable, and which we ardently desire.

We are formed with ideas and expectations of happiness, which are everlastingly disappointed; with a thirst for future fame, of which we shall never be conscious; with a passionate longing for immortality, which was never meant to be gratified.

Every part of our constitution shows that we are accountable for our conduct, every remorse of conscience is a proof that we are so; there is a Superior, who has given us a rule to walk by, who has a right to enquire whether we have conformed to that rule; yet that enquiry is *never* made.

The world in which we are placed is one continued scene of probation. We appear to

be sent into it with no other view but to show how we can behave, under all that variety of difficult and distressful circumstances into which, by one means or other, we are continually thrown. Yet our behaviour passes totally unregarded. We perform *our* parts, but the Judge who has tried us, forgets to perform *his*. Our trial is finished, and no consequences follow; no sentence is pronounced; we are neither rewarded for having acted well, nor punished for having acted ill.

We conceive ourselves to be the subjects of an Almighty Governor, who has given us a system of laws for our direction. Yet he appears to be perfectly indifferent whether we observe those laws or not. His friends and his enemies fare frequently alike. Nay, the former are often punished with the heaviest afflictions, and the latter rewarded with every earthly enjoyment.

There has, in fine, been, from the first ages of the world down to this moment, an almost universal agreement and consent of all mankind in the belief or apprehension of a future state of existence; and yet this turns out to

be nothing more than a delusive imagination, though impressed so deeply by nature itself on every human breast.

What now can be imagined more strange and inexplicable; more absurd and inconsistent; more replete with disorder, confusion, and misery; more unworthy the wisdom, the justice, the goodness of the Supreme Being, than the frame of man, and the constitution of the world, according to the representation here given of them?

But when, on the other hand, you extend your view beyond the limits of this *life*, and take in the consideration of *another*, what an alteration does this instantly make in the appearance of every thing within and without us! The mist that before rested on the face of the earth vanishes away, and discovers a scene of the utmost order, beauty, harmony, and regularity. The moment our relation to another world is known, all perplexity is cleared up, and all inconsistencies are reconciled.

We then find ourselves composed of two parts, a material body and an immaterial soul; and the seemingly incompatible properties of matter and spirit, instead of being

intermixed and incorporated together in one substance, have each their distinct province assigned them in our compound frame, and reside in separate substances suited to their respective natures. But though different from each other, they are closely united together. By this union we are allied both to the visible and invisible, the material and the spiritual world, and stand as it were on the confines of each. And when the body reverts to earth, the soul betakes itself to that world of immortal spirts to which it belongs.

Those extraordinary faculties and powers of the human mind, which seem far beyond what the uses of this short life require, become highly proper and suitable to a being that is designed for eternity, and are nothing more than what is necessary to prepare it for that heavenly country which is its proper home, and is to be its everlasting abode. There they will have full room to open and expand themselves, and to display a degree of vigour and activity not to be attained in the present life. There they will go on improving to all eternity, and acquire that state of perfection to which they are always tending, but have not time in this world to arrive at.

When once it is certain that we are to give an account of ourselves hereafter, there is then a plain reason why we are free agents; why a rule is given us to walk by; why we have a power of deviating from, or conforming to it; why, in short, we undergo a previous examination at the bar of our consciences before we appear at the tribunal of our great Judge.

Our earnest thirst for fame, for happiness, for immortality, will, on the supposition of a future existence, serve some better purpose than to disappoint and distress us. They are all natural desires, with objects that correspond to them; and will each of them meet with that gratification in another life which they in vain look for in this.

Nay, even that unequal distribution of good and evil, at which we are so apt to repine, and those heavy afflictions that sometimes press so hard upon the best of men, are all capable of an easy solution the moment we take a future life into the account. This world is then only part of a system. It was never intended for a state of *retribution*, but of *probation*. Here we are only *tried*; it is

hereafter we are to be *rewarded*, or *punished*. The evils we meet with, considered in this light, assume a very different aspect. They are wise, and even benevolent provisions, to put our virtues to the proof; to produce in us that temper, and those dispositions, which are necessary preparations for immortal glory.

Thus does the supposition of a future state clear up every difficulty, and disperse the darkness that otherwise hangs over this part of God's creation. With this light of immortality held up before us, we can find our way through the obscurest parts of God's moral government, and give a satisfactory account of his dealings with mankind. It is therefore a most convincing proof of the reality of a future state, that it answers so many excellent purposes, and seems so indispensably necessary to give harmony and regularity to the designs of the Almighty in the formation of this globe, and its inhabitants, and to be the finishing and winding up of one uniform and consistent plan of divine conduct. For, as *in the material world*, when we find that the principle of gravita-

tion, upon being applied to the several parts of the universe, explains, in the justest and most elegant manner, the situations, appearances, and influences of the heavenly bodies, and even accounts for all the seeming irregularity and eccentricity of their motions, we make no scruple of allowing the existence and the operation of such a power: so, in the *moral system*, when we see that the admission of another life gives an easy solution of the most surprising and otherwise unaccountable phænomena; and is, as it were, *a master-key* that unlocks every intricacy, and opens to us the great plan of Providence in the administration of human affairs; we can no longer, without doing violence to every rule of just reasoning, refuse our assent to the truth and reality of such a state.

From this collective view of those arguments for a future existence, which are the result of our own researches on the subject, it appears, that, when combined together, they form a very strong body of evidence in support of that great truth.

This evidence has, indeed, as I before observed, been represented by some to be so

forcible and decisive, as to render the aid of Revelation on this point totally unnecessary. But so far is this from being the case, that *the very clearness* with which we are now enabled to deduce the reality of a future retribution from the principles of reason, will itself lead us to a very convincing proof of the absolute necessity there was for some superior light to instruct and direct mankind, in this and other doctrines of the utmost importance to their present and future happiness.

It has been shown, that in every age and nation of the world, the belief of another life after this has been strongly and universally impressed on the minds of the common people. It has been shown also, that besides these natural impressions, we may, by a proper exertion of our reasoning powers, and by considering the question attentively in various points of view, draw together a great number of strong presumptive proofs in support of the same important truth. From these premises one should naturally conclude, that all the great sages of antiquity, those wise, and venerable, and learned men, who cultivated letters and philosophy with

so much reputation and success, who were the guides and luminaries, the instructors and legislators of the Heathen world, would have been among the very first to embrace the idea of a future retribution; to see more clearly, and feel more forcibly, than any others, the united testimony of nature and of reason in its behalf; to rectify the mistakes and refine the gross conceptions of the vulgar concerning it; to clear away the rubbish with which the fictions of the poets, and the superstitions of the people, had clogged and corrupted the genuine sentiments of nature; and by delivering, in their writings, a clear, consistent, rational, methodical exposition of this great truth, to establish it for ever in the minds of men, and convert an article of popular belief into a fundamental tenet of the reigning philsophy. This, I say, it was natural to expect from them; and had they done this, there might have been some pretence for asserting that there was no need for any farther light on this subject. But what is the real state of the case? Look into the writings of the ancient philosophers, respecting a future

retribution, and (with few if any exceptions) you see nothing but embarrassment, confusion, inconsistence, and contradiction. In one page you will find them expatiating with apparent satisfaction on the arguments then commonly produced for the immortality of the soul, and a state of recompense hereafter; answering the several objections to them with great acuteness, illustrating them with wonderful ingenuity and art, adorning them with all the charms of their eloquence, declaring their entire assent to them, and protesting that nothing should ever wrest from them this delightful persuasion, the very joy and comfort of their souls. In another page the scene is totally changed. They unsay almost every thing they had said before. They doubt, they fluctuate, they despond, they disbelieve.* They laugh at

* Nescio quomodo, dum lego, assentior; cum posui librum & mecum ipse de immortalitate animorum cæpi cogitare, assensio omnis illabitur. *Tusc. Quæst. l.* i. *c.* 11. And again, Dubitans, circumspectans, hæsitans, multa adversa † revertens, tanquam ratis in mari immenso nostra vehitur Oratio, c. 30. A most lively picture of the fluctuation and uncertainty of their minds on this subject.

† Reverens. *Davis.*

the popular notions of future punishments and rewards, but they substitute nothing more rational or satisfactory in their room. Nay, what is still more extraordinary, although they all acknowledged, that the belief of a future life and a future recompense was an universal principle of nature; that it was what all mankind with one voice concurred and agreed in; yet, notwithstanding this, many of them seem even *to have taken pains* to stifle this voice of nature within them; and considered it as a *victory* of the greatest importance, to subdue and extinguish those notices of a future judgment, which, in despite of themselves, they found springing up within their own breasts.*

What now shall we say to this remarkable fact, this singular phænomenon in the history of the human mind? Can there possibly be a more striking proof that Philosophy, divine Philosophy (as it is sometimes called), which is now frequently set up as the rival of Revelation, was in general utterly unable to lead men to the acknowledgment

* See Virgil, Georg. ii. v. 490. Lucretius, l. i. v. 80., and l. iii. v. 37.; and Tusc. Quæst. l. i. c. 21.

of one of the plainest and most important, and most *rational* truths in natural religion; that, instead of aiding the suggestions of nature, and confirming the dictates of reason, it perplexed the one, and resisted the other; and that some of the greatest and most learned men of antiquity exactly answered the description given of them in Scripture; "professing themselves to be wise, they "became fools?"* Though superior to all the rest of the world in philosophy and literary attainments, yet in some great points of religious knowledge they sunk frequently even below the meanest of the people. They ran counter, in short, to the common sense of mankind, and philosophized themselves out of truths, which we *now* see, and which the bulk of men even *then* saw, to be conformable to the most natural sentiments of the human mind.

It was therefore highly proper, it was indispensably necessary, that God himself should interpose in a case of such infinite importance; that Revelation should come to the aid of nature and of reason; should restore them to their original force and power;

* Rom. i. 22.

should rescue them out of the hands of *science, falsely so called* *, whose province, in matters of religion, it has commonly been to *spoil* mankind with *vain deceit* †, and to lead those wrong, whom their own good sense and uncorrupted judgment would probably have directed right.

The truth is (but it is a truth which the Freethinker has always been very unwilling to admit) that Christianity has, in fact, contributed very greatly to that improved state, and advantageous point of view, in which natural religion now appears to us; and many of those who reject the *authority* of the Gospel, are, without knowing it perhaps, most certainly without owning it, made wiser by its *discoveries*. In the present instance particularly, the divine light of Revelation has thrown a brightness on the distant prospect beyond the grave, which has brought out to view, and rendered more distinct, even *to the eye of reason*, a variety of obscure points, which were before invisible to her unassisted sight. Hence the remarkable difference there is between the reasonings of the ancients and

* 1 Tim. vi. 20. † Col. ii. 8.

the moderns on this question. Hence the force, the clearness, the decision, that appear in the one; the perplexity, feebleness, and uncertainty that distinguish the other. Of this no other probable cause can be assigned, than that the Pagan philosopher had nothing but the *wisdom of this world* to guide his researches into a future state; whereas the Christian, and even the Deistical philosopher, comes to the inquiry with his mind full of those ideas which an early acquaintance with Revelation has imperceptibly impressed upon him. To explore a road which is entirely unknown to us, by a feeble and a dubious light, is a totally different thing from endeavouring to trace it out again by the same light, after it has been once shown to us in broad and open day. The former is the case of the ancients, and the latter of the moderns, in respect to a future life.

But besides the benefit derived from Revelation in this respect, there are other advantages, of the utmost importance, which the Gospel-doctrine of LIFE AND IMMORTALITY brings along with it; and which gives its evidences an infinite superiority over those of natural religion.

The principal of these are,

1st. The *certainty and authority* of its proofs.

2dly. Their *plainness and perspicuity.*

3dly. The *nature and duration* of its rewards.

1. The certainty and authority of its proofs.

After giving every possible advantage to the natural evidences of a future state, it must be acknowledged, that they amount to nothing more than *great probability.* They cannot afford that *demonstrative certainty* and *assurance* of this great truth, which is essentially necessary for the complete satisfaction and comfort of the mind, in so very interesting a point, and for rendering this doctrine a motive of sufficient weight to influence the hearts and regulate the conduct of mankind. Neither of these effects could nature and reason (universally as they had diffused the belief of a future existence) produce in the Heathen world. This the writings of their philosophers, and the manners of their people, incontestably prove. To the Gospel alone we are indebted for the *entire removal* of all doubt and uncertainty on this

subject; for raising hope into confidence, and a mere *speculative notion* into a vital and most powerful *principle of action.* It is evident, that nothing less than an express Revelation from God himself could do this. He who first brought us into being can alone give us *authentic information*, how long that being shall be continued, and in what manner he will dispose of us hereafter. This information he *has* given us in the Scriptures, and has given it in such plain, and explicit, and awful terms, as must carry conviction to every unprejudiced understanding, and leave the deepest and most useful impressions on every well-disposed mind.

2. Another benefit we derive from Revelation on this head, is the *plainness and perspicuity* of its proofs. A great part of those evidences of a future state, which reason furnishes, require a considerable degree of attention and consideration, and are therefore better adapted to men of a contemplative, philosophic turn, than to the generality of mankind, who have neither leisure, nor inclination, nor abilities, to enter into long and abstruse disquisitions on this or any

other question of importance. But the arguments of the Gospel are (and thanks be to God that they are) of quite a different sort. It sets before us the declarations of God himself, "That there shall be a resur-" rection of the dead, both of the just and " the unjust; that God hath appointed a " day in which he will judge the world in " righteousness; and that we must all ap-" pear before the judgment-seat of Christ, " that every one may receive the things done " in his body, according to that he hath " done, whether it be good or bad." * To convince us, not only of the possibility, but of the certainty, of so wonderful an event, it appeals to *facts;* it shows us Christ himself, " risen from the dead, and become the first " fruits of them that slept." It afterwards exhibits him to us in a still more illustrious point of view. It represents him as " com-" ing in the clouds of heaven, with power " and great glory, to judge the world. The " trumpet sounds, and the dead, both small " and great, are raised up; and before him " are gathered" (what an awful and astonish-

* Acts xxiv. 15.; xvii. 3. 2 Cor. v. 10.

ing spectacle!) "ALL THE NATIONS OF THE "EARTH; and he separates them one from "another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep "from the goats. The books are opened, "and he judgeth them out of the things "that are written in the books, according "to their works; and the wicked go away "into everlasting punishment; but the "righteous into life eternal." *

These are not profound and curious speculations, beyond the reach of common apprehensions. They are *plain facts, and solemn denunciations from the very highest authority*, speaking with equal force to all ranks of men, and, by their simplicity and dignity, adapted no less to the capacity of the illiterate than to the most exalted conceptions of the learned. Hence it has come to pass, that these divine truths being preached to the *poor* as well as to the *rich* (a circumstance peculiar to the Gospel, and therefore mentioned as one of its distinguishing characteristics †,) have conveyed to the very humblest disciples of Christ far clearer ideas,

* Matt. xxiv. 30. 1 Cor. xv. 52. Rev. xx. 12. Matt. xxv. 32. 46.

† Matt. xi. 5.

and juster notions, of a future state, than were to be found in all the celebrated schools of philosophy at Athens or at Rome.

3. But there is still another point, and that of the utmost consequence, respecting a future state, in which the infinite superiority of Revelation to the light of nature must evidently appear. And that is the *nature and duration* of the rewards which it promises.

The utmost that reason can pretend to is, to prove that we shall survive the grave; that we shall exist in another world; and that there the wicked shall be punished according to their demerits, and the good rewarded with such a degree of happiness, as their virtues and their sufferings here seem in justice to require. This is all that is necessary to vindicate the ways of God to mankind; and therefore beyond this, our own reasoning powers, and our natural expectations, cannot go. Indeed the very best and wisest of the Pagan philosophers did not go near so far as this. Some of them, although they believed the existence of the soul *after death*, yet denied that it would exist *for ever*.* Others

* Stoici — *diu* mansuros aiunt animos, *semper* negant. — Tusc. Quæst. l. i. c. 31.

admitted its eternity, but did not allow that it passed into a state of rewards and punishments. They supposed it would be resolved into the UNIVERSAL SPIRIT from which it was originally detached. And even of those who acknowledged a future retribution, many asserted that the punishments only were eternal, the rewards of a *temporary* nature.* And indeed it must be owned, that there are no principles of natural religion which give us any ground to hope for a state of felicity hereafter, unmixed and perfect in its kind, beyond all conception great, and in duration endless. It is from Revelation only we learn that *such* shall be the rewards "of "the righteous; that God shall wipe away "all tears from their eyes, and there shall "be no more death, neither sorrow nor cry- "ing; that he will give them glory, and "honour, and immortality; that they shall "go away into life eternal, and enter into "the joy of their Lord; that in his pre- "sence there is fulness of joy, and pleasures "for evermore; that eye hath not seen, nor "ear heard, neither have entered into the

* Div. Leg. vol. ii. p. 109.

" heart of man, the good things which God " hath prepared for them that love him." *

In these, and many other passages of the same nature, we are expressly assured, that both our existence and our happiness hereafter shall be, in the strictest sense of the word, *everlasting*. This, none but God himself could promise, or, when promised, fulfil. It is more than the utmost sagacity of human reason could discover; more than the utmost perfection of human virtue could claim. ETERNAL LIFE, therefore, is constantly and justly represented in Scripture as " the GIFT, the FREE GIFT of God, through " Jesus Christ †;" and, were it on this account only, it might be truly said, " that " life and immortality were brought to light " through the Gospel." ‡

Mark then, I entreat you, in conclusion, mark the difference between the *wisdom of man* and *that wisdom which is from above*. The former, as you have just seen in the instance of the ancient philosophers, does

* Rev. vii. 27. Rom. ii. 7. Matt. xxv. 21. 36. Psalm xvi. 11. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

† Rom. v. 18.; vi. 23.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 10.

violence, by its false refinements in some of the most essential truths of religion, to the clearest principles of nature and of reason. The latter illustrates, corroborates, improves, and perfects them. This has been shown to be the case in one very important doctrine, and might be shown in more. Our Divine Master is indeed, in every instance, and especially in that we have been now considering "THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND "THE LIFE*;" and whenever we are tempted to desert this heavenly guide, and to *go away* either to philosophy, or to any other instructor, we have our answer ready prepared for us in that noble and affecting reply of St. Peter to Jesus, "Lord, to whom "shall we go? Thou hast the words of "ETERNAL LIFE: and we believe and are "sure that thou art THAT CHRIST, THE SON "OF THE LIVING GOD." †

* John xiv. 6. † Ib. vi. 68, 69.

SERMON VIII.

TITUS ii. 6.

YOUNG MEN LIKEWISE EXHORT TO BE SOBER-MINDED.

THERE is scarce any subject of exhortation so necessary to youth, as that which is here recommended by St. Paul. Alacrity, emulation, benevolence, frankness, generosity, are almost the natural growth of that enchanting age. What it chiefly wants is something to regulate and temper these good qualities; and to do that is the province of SOBER-MINDEDNESS. Let not the young man be frighted with the solemnity of the name. It implies nothing unsuitable to his years, or inconsistent with his most valuable enjoyments. It tends to improve his cheerfulness, though it may restrain his extravagancies; to give the warmth of his

imagination and the vigour of his understanding a right direction; to single out such enterprises for him as are worthy of his natural vivacity and ardour; to prevent his talents and industry from becoming mischievous, his pleasures from proving ruinous, and to render his pursuits subservient, not only to present delight, but to substantial and permanent happiness.

It is evident that there is both a moral and an intellectual sobriety; a modest reserve, a rational guard upon ourselves, not only in acting, but in thinking: and the original word σωφρονειν, which we translate, *to be sober-minded*, includes both these kinds of *sobriety*. Its primary signification is, to be wise, prudent, temperate; and this wisdom chiefly consists —

I. In the government of the passions.

II. In the government of the understanding.

First, then, we are commanded to teach young men the government of their passions. "To flee youthful lusts*," is an apostolical admonition, not very grateful, perhaps, to

* 2 Tim. ii. 22.

youthful ears; but so indispensably requisite both to temporal and eternal happiness, that it must, at all events, and by every possible means, be inculcated and enforced. It comprehends all those irregular desires, to the influence of which is owing much the greatest part of the vice and misery that desolate mankind. "From whence come "wars and fightings among you? Come they "not hence, even of your lusts, which war "in your members?"* From whence (may we add) come murders, frauds, breaches of trust, violations of the marriage-bed, the ruin of unguarded and unsuspecting innocence, the distress and disgrace of worthy families, the corruption and subversion of whole kingdoms? Come they not all from one and the same impure source, from the violence of headstrong and unruly appetites, which, in pursuit of some unlawful object, burst through all restraints of decency, justice, honour, humanity, gratitude; and throw down every barrier, however sacred, that stands between them and the attainment of their end.

The passions, then, must be governed, or

* James iv. 1.

they will govern us; and like all other slaves when in possession of power, will become the most savage and merciless of tyrants. But at what time shall we *begin* to govern them? The very moment, surely, that *they begin* to raise commotions in the soul; the moment we know from conscience, from reason, from Revelation, that the gratifications they require ought not to be granted. This period may in some be earlier than in others; but it can scarce ever be later in any than the usual time of being transplanted to this place.* Here then you ought at once to enter on the disposition of your studies and the regulation of your desires. There is no danger of your undertaking so arduous and necessary a task too soon. If you hope to acquire any authority over your passions, you must enure them to early obedience, and bend them to the yoke while they are yet pliant and flexible. It will, even then, indeed, be a difficult task. But what is there worth having that is to be obtained without difficulties. They are inseparable from a state of probation, and

* Cambridge; where this Sermon was preached. See the Table of Contents.

youth is the proper time for subduing them. In other instances, the obstructions you encounter serve only to stimulate your industry and animate your efforts; and why then not in this? Be the discouragements what they will, the consequence is not, that you ought to desist from the attempt, but, that you ought to begin the sooner. For these obstacles, instead of lessening, will grow upon your hands; every moment you delay will but rivet your chains the faster, and give habit time to strengthen appetite. Besides, you have here advantages and helps towards this great work, which no other place, no other time, can afford. The retirement you enjoy from the great world, and the admirable order here established, were purposely meant to assist you in the science of self-government, no less than in the acquisition of learning. The exclusion of all the most dangerous allurements to vice, of those amusements which excite the softer passions, of those cares and contests which provoke more violent emotions; the frequent and stated returns of divine worship, the exact distribution of time, the allotment of almost every hour to its proper employment, the

necessity of a modest and uniform apparel, of temperate and public meals, of reposing at night under one common roof; all these things are most wisely calculated to keep the attention fixed on innocent and useful objects, to curb the imagination, to restrain extravagant desires, to induce habits of modesty, humility, temperance, frugality, obedience; in one word, SOBER-MINDEDNESS. It may be thought, perhaps, that the regulation of dress, and diet, and amusement, and such-like trifles, are below the notice of a great and learned body. But it is a mistake to think so. Order and regularity in the minutest points, tend to introduce them, nay, are necessary to introduce them, in the greatest; accustom the mind to restraint, and insensibly form it to the practice of vigilance and self-denial.

It is, in short, the excellent discipline established in these societies, which is their greatest glory, and must be their firmest support. It is what most eminently distinguishes the Universities of Great Britain from all others in the world, and justly renders them the admiration of every one whom curiosity draws from other climes to visit them. This

distinction, then, so honourable to ourselves, so beneficial to those we educate, it is of the utmost importance for us to maintain with inflexible firmness and resolution. We cannot, without some hazard, give up the smallest article of good government; but in those points which relate immediately to morals, the least relaxation must tend to subvert our credit, and even endanger our existence. In a place sacred to virtue and religion, no species of vice, no kind of temptation to vice, can, for one moment, be tolerated or connived at. We shall not be allowed to say in our defence, that we only kept pace with the manners of the age: this will be deemed our reproach rather than our excuse. It is *our* business, not meanly "to follow a multitude to do evil;" not to *conform* to the corrupt fashions of the times, but by our precepts and our example to fortify our young disciples *against* them. It is evident that the world expects from us a more than ordinary degree of watchfulness over our conduct. It expects that the correction of national abuses should begin here. And the expectation is not unreasonable.

Whence should general reformation take its rise, if ever it rise at all, but from the two great sources of learning and religion? We are as lights set on an eminence, shining at present, indeed, *in a dark place*, in the midst of luxury and profusion, but able, perhaps, by degrees, to disperse the gloom of the surrounding prospect. If we cannot check the excesses of the present age, we may at least crush future extravagancies in their birth, by infusing into our youth those lessons and those habits of frugality, abstinence, and sober-mindedness, which are essential to the welfare both of the universities and of the state.

II. The other great branch of sober-mindedness, which we must recommend to young men, is the government of the understanding.

There is a great variety of intellectual errors, into which, without a proper conduct of the understanding, or, in other words, without a sound and well-cultivated judgment, the young student will be extremely apt to fall. Of these I shall single out only one, against which it seems at present more

arly necessary to caution him, and that insatiable thirst for *novelty*. The ians, we know, in the decline of their " spent their time in nothing else but r to tell or hear some new thing." * respect, whatever may be the case ers, we fall very little short of that but corrupt people; and the greater those who write for popular applause termined at any rate to gratify this gant passion. For this purpose they necessary to depart as far as possible e plain, direct road of nature, sim- and good sense; which being un- ely pre-occupied by those great of composition, the ancients, and the moderns as have trod in their ave them no room in that walk for inction at which they aim. They ut therefore into untried and path- ions, and there strain every nerve, in practice every artifice, to catch ntion and excite the wonder of man- Hence all those various corruptions ture, those affectations of singularity ginality, those quaint conceits, abrupt

* Acts xvii. 21.

digressions, indecent allusions, wild starts of fancy, and every other obliquity of a distorted wit, which vitiate the taste, corrupt the morals, and pervert the principles of young and injudicious readers.* Hence, too, all those late profound discoveries—that to give youth a religious education is to fill them with bigotry and prejudice; that the right way to teach morality is to make vice appear amiable; that true wisdom and philosophy consist in doubting of every thing, in combating all received opinions, and confounding the most obvious dictates of common sense in the inexplicable mazes of metaphysical refinement; that all establishments, civil or religious, are iniquitous and pernicious usurpations on the liberties of mankind; that the only way to be a good Christian is to disbelieve above one half of the Gospel; that piety and self-government are duties not worth a wise man's notice; that benevolence is the sum of all virtue and all religion, and that one great proof of our

* Certain eccentric compositions are here alluded to, which were at that time (1767) much in fashion, and have as usual produced a multitude of wretched imitators of a species of writing which does not admit, and is not worthy, of imitation.

benevolence is to set mankind afloat in uncertainty, and make them as uneasy and hopeless as we can.

When these positions are thus collected together, and proposed without sophistry or disguise to a plain understanding, they appear more like the feverish dreams of a disordered imagination, than the serious assertions of sober and reasonable men. And yet they are notoriously nothing more than a faithful compendium of what some of the most favourite authors of the age, both foreign and domestic, avowedly recommend to us, as maxims of wisdom and rules of conduct. Were they actually adopted as such by the bulk of the people, it is easy to see what wild work they would make in society. In effect, the recent oportunities we have had in this island, of observing the ridiculous extravagancies resulting from those principles, and the infinite absurdities of a practice formed on the too prevailing system of modern ethics, are abundantly sufficient to convince us of their utter unfitness for the uses and the duties of common life, as well as for the purposes of the life to come. It behoves us, therefore, to guard our young

disciples, with the utmost care, against this visionary fantastic philosophy, which owes its birth to the concurrence of much vanity and little judgment with a warm and ungoverned imagination, and is studious to recommend itself by the united charms of novelty and eloquence. These are indeed to young minds attractions almost irresistible; but yet a right culture of the understanding will be an effectual security against them; and, with some few improvements, there cannot, perhaps, be a better for that purpose, than the course of study marked out by the wisdom of the University to the youth of this place; and which, to their praise be it spoken, is pursued by them with astonishing application and success.

That judicious mixture of polite letters and philosophic sciences, which is the necessary preparative for their first degree, is admirably calculated at once to refine their taste, enlarge their notions, and exalt their minds. By beginning in the first place with CLASSICAL LITERATURE, and improving the acquaintance they have already made with the best and purest writers of antiquity, they will insensibly acquire a relish for true

simplicity and chastity of composition: They will learn strength and clearness of conception, accuracy, order, correctness, copiousness, elegance, and dignity of expression. They will find that the most justly approved writers of our own times have formed themselves on those great models; and (as one, who well understood what originality was, expresses himself) they will perceive that, "a true genius is not any bold writer, who breaks through the rules of decency to distinguish himself by the singularity of his opinions; but one who, on a deserving subject, is able to open new scenes, and discover a vein of true and noble thinking, which never entered into any imagination before; every stroke of whose pen is worth all the paper blotted by hundreds of others in the whole course of their lives."*

The cultivation of LOGIC, at the same time, and the most useful and practical branches of the MATHEMATICS, (which are excellent examples of severe reasoning and sagacious investigation,) will also be of sin-

* Swift's proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English tongue; in a Letter to Lord Oxford.

gular use in preserving our youth from error, in every subsequent part of knowledge. It will teach them to arrange, and methodize, and connect their thoughts; to examine the arguments of others with a nice and critical penetration; to pursue them through a long concatenation of dependent propositions, and discover whether any link in the chain of proofs be wanting; to distinguish sense from sound, ideas from words, hasty and peremptory decisions from just and legitimate conclusions. It will put them upon their guard against bold and novel opinions, especially if addressed to the imagination by strokes of wit, or to the heart by affecting descriptions, rather than to the understanding by sound and conclusive reasoning. By keeping their judgment in constant exercise, it will improve and strengthen that excellent and useful, but little regarded, faculty. It will instruct them in the several degrees of certainty, and the various kinds of proof, of which different subjects are capable; the just grounds of doubt, assent, or disbelief; the true limits and extent, of the human understanding; that precise point, in short, at

which our curiosity ought to stop, and beyond which all is uncertainty, conjecture, and darkness.

The first suitable employment of our minds thus improved, is to turn their new-acquired sagacity inward upon themselves, and, with the help of the best ethical writers, ancient and modern, to make a careful inspection into their own wonderful frame and constitution. This leads us into the province of MORAL PHILOSOPHY; by the aid of which we shall perceive more distinctly the nature and true value of the rational, the social, the selfish, principles of action within us, and what tenor of life they point out to us as best accommodated to our circumstances, and calculated to produce the most substantial happiness. By leading young people early into such inquiries as these, many things may be taught them of unspeakable use to themselves and others, and many admirable rules suggested to them for the regulation of their future conduct.

After this survey of the *moral*, it is time to contemplate the wonders of the *material* world. The great volume of nature is there-

fore now thrown open to the student. He is led by the hand of science through all the astonishing and sublime discoveries of the NEWTONIAN PHILOSOPHY. He is made acquainted with the several properties of matter in all its various forms and modifications on this globe of earth; and furnished with principles for increasing and improving the conveniences of common life. He is then transported to distant planets and other worlds. He investigates the laws that govern their revolutions, and the forces that retain them in their orbits. "He con-"siders the sun when it shineth, and the "moon walking in brightness*," and all the host of heaven standing in array before him: and sometimes extends his thoughts even beyond these, beyond the reach of sense, to new firmaments and new lights, rising up to his imagination, in endless succession, through the regions of unbounded space. But so far is he from being "secretly enticed†," as some have formerly been, to convert his admiration of these glorious luminaries, into an impious adoration of

* Job xxxi. 26. † Ib. xxxi. 27.

them, that they serve only, as they naturally should do, to carry him up to their great Author, even the "Father of lights."* He sees the DEITY plainly written in these splendid characters, he derives from them the justest and most magnificent conceptions of his nature and attributes, and thus lays a firm and solid foundation for the superstructure of NATURAL RELIGION, which forms the next great object of his attention.

In the pursuit of this most important branch of knowledge, he will perceive how far the powers of nature and of reason are capable of going, in establishing those great fundamental truths of religion; the being of a God, a superintending Providence, a moral government of the universe, the essential and unalterable difference between right and wrong, virtue and vice, a future state of existence and of retribution, and the obligations which such a system of things imposes on every rational agent to conform his conduct to the will of the Creator; as far as it can be collected from the constitution of the world, from the genuine sentiments of nature, the

* James i. 17.

faculties of the human mind, and the attributes of the Deity himself. In these researches, he will find light enough to determine an honest and unprejudiced mind to the belief of all the above-mentioned momentous doctrines, and obscurity enough to make him earnestly wish for clearer evidence, and more authentic information, on subjects of such infinite importance.

After these inquiries, the student's next advance is to METAPHYSICAL SPECULATIONS. These, it must be owned, have been but too often employed in undermining and subverting the clearest principles of morality and religion. But when carried only to a certain point, under the direction of a sound judgment and an honest mind, some knowledge of them may be attended with singular advantages.* It will secure the young student from being caught in the snares which

* A very convincing proof of this we have lately had, in that most masterly piece of reasoning, called *Divine Benevolence asserted, &c.* by Dr. Balguy. Whoever has read this with the attention it requires and deserves, will most earnestly wish that nothing may prevent the learned author from gratifying the public with *that larger work*, of which the treatise we are speaking of is only a small specimen.

sophists sometimes weave out of those slender materials; will teach him to abstract and generalize, and simplify his ideas; will qualify him to drag out falsehood and scepticism from the midst of those obscure, and intricate, and crooked mazes, in which they love to wander; to detect the endless errors, into which excessive subtilty and false refinement must necessarily lead us; to perceive that a quick understanding may as easily miss the middle point where truth resides, by going beyond it, as a dull one by falling short of it; and that there are in religion, as in all sciences, certain primary and fundamental truths, which are only obscured by much reasoning, and which, after having been once firmly established, should be laid up as first principles in the mind, where no subtle objections or acute distinctions should be allowed to weaken or destroy their force.

Thus do each of the several branches of learning, which compose the plan of education in this place, contribute something towards the SOBER-MINDEDNESS recommended by St. Paul. And, what is of still greater importance, the fund of knowledge

which our youth will probably acquire in the prosecution of these studies, nay, even the very difficulties which may sometimes obstruct their progress, will gradually prepare their understandings for the admission of still nobler ideas, and sublimer contemplations. In their pursuit, more especially, of moral and religious truth, they will find, as I before remarked, so much wanting to give complete satisfaction to the mind, that they cannot but see the absolute necessity of some more perfect system of doctrines and of duties, to supply the many defects of natural religion, to strengthen its obligations, to enforce it with proper sanctions, and to give it a vital and effectual influence upon the heart.

Under the impression of such reflections as these, it is obvious that there cannot be a more proper time for carrying the young academic still one step farther, and giving him some insight into the nature, the design, the evidences, and the precepts of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

But here unfortunately we are obliged to stop. For this most important part of education no *adequate*, no *public* provision is yet

made in this University. Revealed religion has not yet a proper rank assigned it here among the other initiatory sciences; is not made an indispensable qualification for academical honours and rewards; has not, in short, all that regard paid to it, which its own intrinsic worth, and the peculiar circumstances at present attending it, seem to demand.

It is well known, that an unbounded freedom is now indulged to the publication of the most licentious opinions; and that these are not, as formerly, confined to bulky volumes of infidelity, or to dull and phlegmatic reasoners; but are dispersed throughout the nation in the most commodious and pleasing vehicles, in works of fancy and amusement, and even useful information, which diffuse irreligion almost imperceptibly through the kingdom, and on which men of real genius do not scruple to waste their time and misapply their talents. These are the books most likely to fall into the hands, and to captivate the hearts, of young men of rank and fortune, at that very dangerous period of life, when they first leave their colleges to mingle in the great world; and on these, if they have not

here been taught sounder principles and better things, they will most probably form their notions of religion, and regulate their future conduct. Add to this, that a very great part of those who are bred up among us to the church, and from whose pious labours we must chiefly hope for a remedy to these evils, are frequently obliged, by the straitness of their circumstances, to enter on the ministerial office within a very short time after they have taken their first degree, and are, many of them, immediately engaged in large and laborious cures. If, therefore, they have not before this time acquired some tolerable knowledge of their profession, how can they undertake to explain the Gospel to others, and defend it against so many formidable opposers? In the two other learned professions, LAW and PHYSIC, a regular course of study in the theory of each is generally deemed requisite, before those who engage in either think it safe or creditable to venture on the practical part of their business. And it will be difficult, I conceive, to assign a satisfactory reason, why a competent fund of professional knowledge is not equally necessary

to the divine, previous to his embarking in the various and laborious functions of his sacred calling; unless it be maintained, that the future salvation of mankind is a matter of less inportance than their temporal property or their bodily health.

Does it not then seem highly advisable for us to turn our thoughts a little more towards this great object than has been hitherto deemed requisite? It is true, indeed, that some acquaintance with the abstruser sciences may be a very proper foundation even for theological learning. But it cannot surely be necessary to lay this foundation so exceedingly deep as is here generally done. It cannot be necessary to consume the flower and vigour of the youthful mind, in the very first stage, as it were, of its literary progress; to occupy it wholly for *three entire years* in these preparatory studies, when it should be going on to the "principles" and elements at least "of the "doctrine of Christ*;" should be advancing gradually from the foundation to the superstructure; should be learning, under wise

* Heb. vi. 1.

and experienced "master-builders," to erect that sacred edifice of divine knowledge which must be its strong hold and fortress against the many adversaries it will soon have to contend with. If this great work is not carried on to a certain point, during the course of education in this place, when can we hope that it ever will? They who come here with a view to the means, not of acquiring, but of adorning a fortune, no sooner quit this literary retirement, than they engage with ardour in the various pursuits of fashionable life, and have seldom either inclination or leisure for studies of a serious nature. They who are destined to secular professions, or other active employments, find themselves, after leaving this place, so fully occupied, first in learning, and then discharging, the duties of their respective vocations, that they can scarce ever bring themselves to bestow that degree of attention on religious inquiries which their importance deserves. It is here, then, or no where, that this great object must be brought home to their thoughts, and made a part, *an essential* part of their academic acquirements. And this necessity (as I have already re-

marked) is still more apparent with respect to those who are sent here to qualify themselves for the pastoral office; whose peculiar province and business it will be to instruct the people committed to their care "in the "words of eternal life," and who must therefore never expose themselves to the hazard of that insulting question, "Thou that "teachest another, teachest thou not *first* "thyself?"

It must be acknowledged, indeed, and it is acknowledged with pleasure, that in many private colleges, the great outlines of the Christian dispensation are, by the excellent tutors with which this place abounds, explained and illustrated in a very able manner to their respective pupils. But if there be any weight in what has been here suggested, it will be well worthy of our consideration, whether something more than this is not now become necessary; whether it will not be highly suitable to the dignity, the sanctity of this truly respectable and learned body, to lend the whole weight of their authority to so good a cause; to assist private instructions by *public incitement*; to give some signal *academical encouragement* to this branch of

knowledge, something that should make the cultivation of it not only highly reputable, but indispensably necessary. And, fortunately for us, the way is easy and open to the execution of any such design. That noble spirit of emulation, which so eminently distinguishes the youth of this place, and pushes them on to the most wonderful attainments in the abstrusest sciences, affords us an opportunity, which no other seminary in the world can furnish, of raising whatever fruit we please from so generous a stock. We have only to make revealed religion *an essential part of university learning*, and assign to it a proper share of the usual honorary rewards, and it will soon be pursued with the same ardour of mind and vigour of application, as all the other parts of literature. The current of study amongst us, which was generally thought to run too strongly towards mathematical subjects, has of late years, by means of the excellent institutions in favour of classical learning, been, in some degree, diverted into another and more useful course. By the method here proposed, (or any other of the same tendency which should be judged more eligible,) there would

be one more, and that a still nobler channel opened to it; and some few of those many hours, and those fine talents, which are still, I fear, too lavishly wasted here on abstract speculations, in the most precious and improvable part of life, would be then more profitably employed in learning the rudiments of evangelical truth; and thereby enabling one part of our youth to preserve their religious principles uncorrupted by the artifices of infidelity, in their future commerce with the world; and the other part to become powerful defenders and successful dispensers of the word of God. *

* Since the first publication of this Sermon, some advance has been made towards the accomplishment of the author's wishes. Mr. Norris, a gentleman of fortune in Norfolk, (into whose hands some extracts from this discourse happened to fall,) left by his will, a few years ago, a rent-charge of a hundred guineas a year, for the establishment and maintenance of a Professor in the University of Cambridge, for the sole purpose of reading lectures to the students there, on the Christian Revelation. To this he added twelve pounds a year for a medal and some books, as a premium for the best prose English essay on the same subject. It would be a real consolation to the friends of religion, and especially to those whose province it is to examine candidates for orders, if these well-meant institutions, in conjunction with any other subsidiary one which the wisdom of the University might think fit to adopt, should in due time effectually answer the great purposes enlarged upon and recommended in the preceding pages.

This University had, in the conclusion of the last century, the honour of giving birth to a stupendous system of philosophy, erected by its great disciple NEWTON, on the immovable basis of experiment and demonstration; which, by degrees, supplanted and overthrew a visionary though ingenious representation of nature, drawn by fancy, and supported by conjecture. Animated with this success, let it now endeavour to push its conquests still farther into the regions of ignorance and error, to banish from the kingdom the extravagant conceits of modern scepticism, no less destitute of all foundation in truth, utility, and sound reasoning, than the philosophical romance of Descartes; and to establish for ever in the minds of the British youth, a religion founded not on "the "enticing words of man's wisdom," but on "demonstration of the Spirit and of the "power of God." *

This will be to promote, in the most effectual manner, the benevolent purposes of those great and pious benefactors we are now going to commemorate; whose *first*

* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

object in these magnificent foundations was, undoubtedly, the advancement of religion; who, with a true greatness of soul, carried their views forwards into *eternity*, and plainly meant that in these elegant retreats, we should not only lay the foundations of immortal fame on earth, but qualify ourselves for obtaining, through the merits of our Redeemer, a real and truly glorious immortality in heaven.

SERMON IX.

DEUTERONOMY v. 12.

KEEP THE SABBATH-DAY, TO SANCTIFY IT, AS THE LORD THY GOD HATH COMMANDED THEE.

THE appropriation of one day in seven to the purposes of religion is a practice peculiar to the Jewish and the Christian revelations. And it is a practice so full of wisdom, utility, and humanity, that it may well be produced as one argument, among many others still more convincing, of their divine original.

By comparing together the primary institution of the sabbath, as related in the book of Genesis, and the alterations it afterwards received from our Saviour and his apostles

it is evident that the *Christian Sabbath* is to be considered under two distinct points of view: —

First, As a day of rest from labour.

Secondly, As a day set apart for the public worship of God.

I. As a day of rest from labour.

This rest was by the Mosaic Law so rigorously exacted, that the violation of it was prohibited under no less a penalty than that of death. * Our Divine Master, in this as well as in many other instances, greatly softened the severity of that law. But yet it was plainly his intention, that there should be *a general cessation of labour* on this day. The original reason for this part of the institution still subsisted in *his* days, and must subsist till the end of time; namely, that it might be a standing memorial of the great work of creation, from which the Almighty Author of it *rested* or *ceased*, on the seventh day, and therefore he blessed and sanctified that day for ever. To this Christ himself added another reason of a similar nature; having on the following day *rested* from the

* Exod. xxxv. 2.

great work of redemption, which he completed by rising from the dead. Our abstinence, therefore, from the ordinary occupations of life on the Lord's day, is a tacit kind of acknowledgment that we were created by God, and redeemed by Christ, and that we are duly sensible of the duties resulting from those relations. It appears, moreover, that our Lord himself very religiously observed the rest of the sabbath; which he no otherwise interrupted than by miracles of mercy and compassion. And we may most certainly conclude, that the very same benevolence of disposition which dictated these humane exceptions, would prompt him also to improve and enforce, both by his doctrine and example, the general rule of *resting* on the seventh day. For never was there any injunction so replete with kindness and compassion to the whole human race, especially to the lowest and most wretched part of it, as this. There cannot be a more pleasing or a more consolatory idea presented to the human mind, than that of *one universal pause of labour* throughout the whole Christian world at the same moment of time; diffusing rest, comfort, and peace through a large

part of the habitable globe, and affording ease and refreshment, not only to the lowest part of our own species, but to our fellow-labourers in the brute creation. Even these are enabled to join in this silent act of adoration, this mute kind of homage to the great Lord of all; and although they are incapable of any *sentiments* of religion, yet by this means they become sharers in the *blessings* of it. Every man of the least sensibility must see, must feel, the beauty and utility of such an institution as this; and must see, at the same time, the cruelty of invading this most valuable privilege of the inferior class of mankind, and breaking in upon that sacred repose which God himself has, in pity to their sufferings, given to those that stand most in need of it. It was a point in which it highly became the majesty and the goodness of Heaven itself to interpose. And happy was it for the world that it did so. For, had man, unfeeling man, been left to himself, with no other spur to compassion than natural instinct, or unassisted reason, there is but too much ground to apprehend he would have been deaf to the cries of his labouring brethren, would

have harassed and worn them out with incessant toil; and when they implored, by looks and signs of distress, some little intermission, would perhaps have answered them in the language of Pharaoh's task-masters, "Ye are idle, ye are idle. There shall not "aught of your daily tasks be diminished; "*let more work* be laid upon them, that "they may labour therein."*

That this is no uncandid representation of the natural hardness of the human heart, till it is subdued and softened by the influences of Divine grace, we have but too many unanswerable proofs, in the savage treatment which the slaves of the ancients, even of the most civilized and polished ancients, met with from their unrelenting masters. To them, alas! there was no sabbath, no seventh day of rest! The whole week, the whole year, was, in general, with but few exceptions, one uninterrupted round of labour, tyranny, and oppression.

To these inhumanities the merciful temper of our religion has in a great measure put an end; but there are others, arising

* Exod. v. 9. 11. 17.

from the most shameful intrusions on the sacred leisure of the sabbath, which it has not yet been able to overcome. Look into the streets of this great metropolis on the Lord's Day, and see whether they convey the idea of *a day of rest.* Do not our servants and our cattle seem to be almost as fully occupied on that day as on any other? And, as if this was not a sufficient infringement of their rights, we contrive, by needless entertainments at home, and needless journies abroad, which are often *by choice and inclination reserved* for this very day, to take up all the little remaining part of their leisure time. A sabbath-day's journey was, among the Jews, a proverbial expression for a very short one. Among us it can have no such meaning affixed to it. That day seems to be considered by too many, as set apart, by divine and human authority, for the purpose, not of *rest*, but of its direct opposite, the *labour* of *travelling;* thus adding one day more of torment to those generous but wretched animals whose services they hire; and who, being generally strained beyond their strength the other six days of the week,

have, of all creatures under heaven, the best and most equitable claim to suspension of labour on the seventh. Considerations such as these may perhaps appear to some below the dignity of this place, and the solemnity of a Christian assembly. But benevolence, even to the brute creation, is, in its degree, a duty, no less than to our own species; and it is mentioned by Solomon as a striking feature in the character of a righteous man, that "he is merciful even to his beast." He, without whose permission "not a sparrow "falls to the ground, and who feedeth the "young ravens that call upon him," will not suffer even the meanest work of his hands to be treated cruelly with impunity. He is the common father of the whole creation. He takes every part of it under his protection. He has, in various passages of Scripture, expressed his concern even for irrational creatures, and has declared more especially, in the most explicit terms, that the rest of the sabbath was meant *for our cattle and our servants* as well as for ourselves.

II. But cessation from labour is not the only duty of the Lord's Day. Although it

is to be *a day of rest*, yet it is not to be, what too many seem willing to make it, *a day of indolence and inactivity.* There are employments marked out for it of a very important nature; and of these the first and most essential is,

THE PUBLIC WORSHIP OF GOD.

It is evident, both from reason and Scripture, that public worship is a most useful and indispensable duty. It is equally evident that if this duty *is* to be performed, some fixed and stated *time* for performing it is absolutely necessary; for without this it is impossible that any number of persons can ever be collected together in one place. Now one day in seven seems to be as proper and convenient a portion of our time, to be allotted to this use, as any other that can be named. "The returns of it are frequent enough to keep alive the sense of religion in our hearts, and distant enough to leave a very sufficient interval for our worldly concerns."

If, then, this time was fixed only by the laws, or even by the customs of our country, it would be our duty and our wisdom to comply with it. Considering it merely as *an*

ancient usage, yet if antiquity can render an usage venerable, this must be of all others the *most* venerable; for it is coëval with the world itself. But it had, moreover, as we have seen, the sanction of a divine command. From the very beginning of time God blessed and sanctified the seventh day to the purposes of religion.* That injunction was again repeated to the Jews in the most solemn manner at the promulgation of their law from mount Sinai†, and once more urged upon them by Moses in the words of the text: "Keep the Sabbath-day, to sanctify it, as the "Lord thy God hath commanded thee."

After our Lord's resurrection the first day of the week was, in memory of that great event, substituted in the room of the seventh; and from that time to the present, that is, for almost eighteen hundred years, it has been constantly set apart for the public worship of God by the whole Christian world. And, whatever difference of opinion there may have been in other respects, in this all parties, sects, and denominations of Christians, have universally and invariably agreed. By these

* Gen. ii. 3. † Exod. xx. 8, 9, 10, 11.

means it comes to pass, that on this day many millions of people, in almost every region of the earth, are at one and the same time engaged in prostrating themselves before the throne of grace, and offering up their sacrifice of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to the common Lord of all, " in " whom they live, and move, and have their " being."

There is in this view of the Lord's Day something so wonderfully awful and magnificent, that one would think it almost impossible for any man to resist the inclination he must find in himself to join in this general assembly of the human race; " to go with " the multitude," as the Psalmist expresses it, " into the house of God," and to take a part in a solemnity so striking to the imagination, so suitable to the majesty of heaven, so adapted to the wants, the necessities, the infirmities, the obligations, and the duties of a created and a dependent being.

That they who avow an open contempt of all religion, and *profess* to live without God in the world, without any belief of his existence, or at least of his providential superintendence; that these, I say, should think

it a very needless waste of time to attend divine service, can be no wonder. But that any person who calls himself a disciple of Christ, or even a believer in one Supreme Being, should either totally neglect, or but rarely frequent the public worship of God on that only day which laws both human and divine have appropriated to it, is an instance of contempt for the most sacred and most useful institutions which one should hardly be disposed to credit, if constant and melancholy experience did not too clearly prove the reality of the fact. We see continually that the most trivial pretences of weather, of indisposition, of business, of company; pretences which would not be suffered to interfere one moment, with any favourite pursuit or amusement; are thought reasons of sufficient weight to justify us in slighting the express commands, and deserting the service of our Maker and our Redeemer. And it is greatly to be lamented that these neglects have generally been observed to be most prevalent among those whose education and rank in life should have furnished them with the best principles and the

completest knowledge of their duty; whose example is most open to observation, and has the greatest influence on public manners; whose large proportion of worldly blessings demands a more than ordinary warmth of gratitude to Heaven; and whose situation exposes them to such a variety of trying circumstances as require a more than ordinary share of divine assistance.*

But supposing our attendance on the house of God to be such as it ought, there still remains a question of no small importance: How are we to employ the remaining part of the Lord's Day? Are we to dedicate it altogether to private devotion and religious meditation, to seclude ourselves from all society, and to assume an affected gloom of countenance and severity of deportment; or, may we freely give the reins to our inclination for pleasure, and indulge ourselves

* It must be acknowledged, indeed, that the present remarkable thinness of our churches on Sundays, at the east as well as the west end of the town, (more especially at the time of *evening-service*, which is now but too generally given up as quite superfluous,) is a proof, that neglect of divine worship is not confined to the great, but has pervaded almost every class of people in this capital.

without reserve in all the usual gaieties and amusements of the other six days in the week? Both these extremes may be seen among different denominations of Christians in foreign kingdoms; and they have each, at different periods, been adopted in this. At the beginning of the last century *a book of sports and pastimes*, for Sundays, was set forth, and recommended to the good people of this land by a prince*, who has been sometimes celebrated for his wisdom, but who in this instance certainly was not wise. It gave great, and, it must be owned, just offence to the rising sect of Puritans; who, in the next reign, thinking it impossible to recede too much from the former profanations of the Lord's Day, ran with too much vehemence into the opposite extreme; and converted the most joyful of all festivals into a day of silent, sullen, austere reserve, and a rigorous abstinence from every thing that had the smallest tincture of good-humour. When all these extravagancies had subsided, and the constitution, both civil and ecclesiastical, recovered its ancient form, the Church of

* James the First.

England, with that wisdom and moderation which have generally governed its decisions, took a middle course with respect to the observation of Sunday. In conformity to ancient statutes and usages, it discouraged all public spectacles and diversions, but allowed the more rational pleasures of society, and the cheerfulness of friendly intercourse and conversation; thus drawing the line with a discreet and a skilful hand, between the two opposite extemes of pharisaical preciseness, and secular dissipation. This prudent medium has now for many years been preserved among us: but how much longer it will be preserved, seems at present no easy matter to say. The license of the times, however daring in *other* respects, had hitherto spared the day consecrated to our Maker. But it has now carried its outrages even into that once awful sanctuary. In the very midst of all our dangers and distresses, when it did not seem to be *quite* the time for setting Heaven at defiance, new invasions of the Sabbath have sprung up with surprising effrontery; and we are rapidly departing from that simplicity, sobriety, and purity, in which this holy

tival has been delivered down to us by our ancestors. Various places of amusement for the Sunday evening, unknown to former ages, unknown, I believe, to any other Christian country, have been openly announced, and to the disgrace of our religion and our laws, have been as openly frequented.*

But how can we wonder at these strange extravagancies in the lower classes of the people, when they only improve a little on the liberties taken by too many of their superiors? If they see magnificent gaming-houses erected and publicly resorted to on the Lord's Day; if they see that pernicious amusement admitted on the same day even into private families; if they see numerous and splendid assemblies disturbing the re-

* Since this was written, the wisdom of the legislature has, by an express Act of Parliament, effectually suppressed these nuisances; some of which, from the best and most authentic information, I have reason to believe were nurseries of popery, infidelity, and vice. It is to be hoped, that the same high authority will, at a proper time, proceed to the correction of various other abuses, that still infringe, in a flagrant degree, the rest and the devotion of the Lord's Day, but which it was thought prudent to include in the above-mentioned Act.

pose, and violating the sanctity of the Sunday-evening, what do we think must be the consequence? Is it not apparent that they will learn from their betters the fatal lesson of insulting the most venerable customs of their country, and the most sacred ordinances of Heaven? that they will soon even *excel* their masters, and carry their contempt of decency far beyond the original examples of it, which made the first impression on their minds?

But apart from these consequences, which are already but too visible, it behoves every man who indulges himself in any unwarrantable freedoms on the Lord's Day, to consider very seriously, "what spirit he is "of," and what the turn of mind must be from whence such conduct springs. If, after having spent six days out of seven in a constant round of amusements, he cannot exist without them even on the seventh, it is high time for him to look to his own heart, to check his greedy appetite for pleasure, and to put himself, without delay, under the direction of higher and better principles. If we cannot give up these follies one day in the week, how shall we

bring ourselves to part with them, as at last we must, for ever? Would it not be infinitely more wise and prudent to disentangle ourselves from them by degrees, and to try whether it is not possible to acquire a relish for worthier enjoyments? To assist us in this most useful work, and to put this world, and all its frivolous pursuits, for a few moments out of our thoughts, was one great purpose of the Christian Sabbath; and it is a purpose for which we of the present times ought to be peculiarly thankful. For a day of rest from diversions is now become as necessary to one part of the world, as a day of rest from labour is to the other. Let us then give ourselves a little respite, a little refreshment from the *fatigue* of pleasure. Let us not suffer diversions of any kind, much less of a suspicious and a dangerous kind, to intrude on that small portion of time which God hath appropriated to himself. The whole of it is barely sufficient for the important uses to which it is destined, and to defraud our Maker of any considerable part of it is a species of sacrilege.

But how then (you will say) shall we fill up all those dull, tedious hours, that are not

spent in the public service of the church? How shall we prevent that almost irresistible languor and heaviness which are so apt to take possession of our minds, for want of our usual diversions and occupations on this day?

Surely it can require no great stretch of invention or ingenuity to find out means of employing our vacant time, both innocently and agreeably. Besides the society and conversation of our friends, from which we are by no means precluded, might we not for a few hours find amusement in contemplating the wisdom, the power, the goodness of God in the works of his creation? And might we not draw entertainment, as well as improvement, from some of the sublimer parts of that sacred volume which contains "the "words of eternal life," and with which therefore it surely concerns us to have some little acquaintance?

Or, if more active recreations are required, what think you of that which you may make as active as you please, and which was in fact the supreme delight of our Divine Master, *the recreation of doing good?* If, for instance, it be at all necessary (and when

was it ever more necessary?) to instil into the minds of your children sound principles of virtue and religion; if you have any plans of benevolence to form, any acts of kindness or compassion to execute; if you have committed injuries which ought to be repaired; if you have received injuries which ought to be forgiven; if friends or relations are at variance, whom by a reasonable interposition it would be easy to reconcile; if those you most esteem and love stand in need of advice, of reproof, of assistance, of support; if any occasions, in short, present themselves of convincing the unbeliever, of reclaiming the sinner, of saving the unexperienced, of instructing the ignorant, of encouraging the penitent, of soothing the afflicted, of protecting the oppressed; how can you more profitably, or more delightfully, employ your Sunday leisure, than in the performance of such duties as these; in demonstrating your piety and gratitude to God, by diffusing joy and comfort to every part you can reach of that creation, which was the work of his hands, and from which he rested on the seventh day?

Occupations like these are in their own nature cheerful and enlivening, infinitely more so than that most gloomy of all amusements, which is too often substituted in their room. They are suited to the character of the day. They partake in some measure of its sanctity. They are (as all the amusements of such a day ought to be) refined, intellectual, spiritual. They fill up with propriety and consistency the intervals of divine worship, and in concurrence with that, will help to draw off our attention a little from the objects that perpetually surround us, to wean us gradually and gently from a scene which we must some time or other quit, to raise our thoughts to higher and nobler contemplations, "to fix our affections on things above," and thus qualify us for entering into that HEAVENLY SABBATH, *that* EVERLASTING REST, of which the Christian Sabbath is in some degree an emblem, and for which it was meant to prepare and sanctify our souls.

SERMON X.

1 Cor. i. 22, 23, 24.

THE JEWS REQUIRE A SIGN, AND THE GREEKS SEEK AFTER WISDOM: BUT WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED; UNTO THE JEWS A STUMBLING-BLOCK, AND UNTO THE GREEKS FOOLISHNESS; BUT UNTO THEM WHICH ARE CALDED, BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS, CHRIST THE POWER OF GOD, AND THE WISDOM OF GOD.

ONE of the principal causes of the disgust which many persons have taken at the Gospel of Christ, is the very common, but very unfair practice of judging of it by *preconceived expectations*. They are not content to take what God thinks fit to give; to consider what it is that the Christian

bounds and restore the lustre of the ancient Jewish kingdom.

When, therefore, as the text expresses it, "they required a sign," they did not mean any great miracle in general, nor even (as is commonly supposed) *any* kind of sign, without distinction, *given from heaven;* but they meant probably, that precise individual sign above mentioned, *the sign of the Messiah coming with visible glory in the clouds of heaven,* with his holy angels round him, and all the other ensigns of celestial grandeur.* This illustrious appearance of their promised deliverer, they considered as so essential to his character, so indispensable a mark of his heavenly original, that they distinguished it by the name of the *sign of the Son of Man, the sign of his coming.*† And, what is very remarkable, they frequently demanded this sign, even immediately after our Saviour had worked the most astonishing miracles.‡ The reason of this was, because they thought

* See Gerard on the Genius and Evidence of Christianity, pp. 177—205.

† Matt. xxiv. 3. 30.

‡ Ib. xvi. 1.; xii. 38. John ii. 18, 19, 20.

that no regard was due either to miracles, or to any other evidence, so long as that *capital* and *decisive* one, *that sign from* heaven, on which they had set their hearts, was wanting. And this accounts also for another thing no less extraordinary, at which some persons have been much surprised and offended; namely, that our Saviour constantly refused to give them the sign they demanded. If this sign, it is said, would have convinced and converted them, why should they not have been gratified with it? The fact was, that they could not possibly be gratified with it; because it was inconsistent with that humble and lowly character, in which, for the wisest reasons, God designed, and the prophets foretold, that the Redeemer of the world should actually appear. The sign they wished for was founded on an expectation of his descending visibly from heaven to this lower world with the utmost splendour and magnificence. Whereas it was always intended and predicted that he should be born of an earthly parent; should live in an obscure and indigent condition of life; should be despised, rejected, put to death upon the

cross, laid in the grave, and rise from it again the third day. And therefore his almost constant reply, when they asked a sign, was, "An evil and adulterous generation "seeketh after a sign, and there shall no "sign be given it, but the sign of the pro-"phet Jonas."* By which figurative allusion, he meant to signify his own death, burial, and resurrection. This was in effect saying to them, "You ask a sign from *heaven*; but the only sign I shall vouchsafe to give you, will be a sign from the *earth*. Instead of descending from above, as you expect, in visible pomp and triumph, I shall rise with still greater triumph from the grave, after being numbered three days with the dead."

Still however they persisted in demanding their favourite sign; and with this false idea of the Messiah's character in their mind, which could never be rooted out, it is easy to see how very ill disposed they must be to receive and acknowledge a humble, suffering, crucified Redeemer. That he was "the son of a carpenter; that he was born "at an inn, and laid in a manger; that he

* Matt. xii. 39.; xvi. 4.

"eat and drank with publicans and sinners, "and had not where to lay his head;" these were circumstances of themselves fully sufficient to shock their prejudices and disgust their pride. But when he was moreover betrayed into the hands of his enemies, was mocked and buffeted, and scourged, and at length nailed to the cross; this they must consider as the most undeniable proof of his being an impostor, and would as soon have believed Barabbas to have beentheir Messiah as him. If, indeed, even then, he would have given them what they wanted, *a sign from Heaven;* if he would have come down from the cross, would have made his appearance again, as *from heaven*, with every external mark of celestial magnificence, and restored the kingdom again to Israel, they declared that they would still have believed on him. "If he "be THE KING OF ISRAEL," said they, "let him now come down from the cross*," let him openly show his regal power, "and "we will believe him." He saved others, it is true, he worked many astonishing miracles; but, unless he saved himself too,

* Matt. xxvii. 42.

unless he answered their exalted notions of the Messiah, he could not possibly be the Son of God. His miracles must have been wrought by Beelzebub, and he as little worthy of credit as the malefactors who suffered with him.

Such were the prepossessions which made CHRIST CRUCIFIED A STUMBLING-BLOCK TO THE JEWS. The prejudices which made him FOOLISHNESS TO THE GREEKS, were of a different nature. The Greeks were at that time, when the Gospel was first preached to them, as they had been long before, the polite scholars and the fashionable philosophers of the age. The great business and delight of these men was to speculate on nice metaphysical points, such as, the first principles and elements of things, the nature of the gods, the nature of the human soul, the chief good, the several divisions of virtue, the origin of good and evil, and other subjects of the same kind. In these disquisitions, all that they aimed at was, not to arrive at certainty (for that many of them declared to be absolutely impossible) much less to apply the result of their disputations to any one useful purpose

of life; but merely to indulge an insatiable appetite for something *new*, to gratify an idle and vain curiosity, to amuse themselves and others with subtle arguments and acute distinctions, to show their ingenuity in managing a dispute, in proposing captious and artful questions, in creating doubts, and raising difficulties on the plainest points, in refining and explaining away every topic they discussed into perplexity and confusion, and leaving the mind more dissatisfied and uninformed at the conclusion than it was at the beginning of the debate. This they imagined, like many other philosophers in our own times, to be the very perfection of human wisdom; they thought it worthy of the gods themselves; and that of course, whoever came commissioned from Heaven to teach religion to mankind, would teach it in all the forms of the schools, with the subtlety of a sophist, and the eloquence of a rhetorician. It is easy to conceive, then, how exceedingly they must be disappointed, when a new religion was proposed to them, consisting chiefly of a few plain facts, and practical precepts, calculated, not to amuse the fancy, but to reform the heart;

[illegible] he answered their exalted notions of the Messiah, he could not possibly be the Son of God. His miracles must have been wrought by Beelzebub, and he as little worthy of credit as the malefactors who suffered with him.

Such were the prepossessions which made Christ [illegible] a STUMBLING-BLOCK TO THE JEWS. The prejudices which made him FOOLISHNESS TO THE GREEKS, were of a different nature. The Greeks were at that time, when the Gospel was first preached to them, as they had been long before, the polite scholars and the fashionable philosophers of the age. The great business and delight of these men was to speculate on nice metaphysical points, such as the first principles and elements of things, the nature of the gods, the nature of the human soul, the chief good, the several divisions of virtue, the origin of good and evil, and other subjects of the same kind. In these disquisitions all that they aimed at was not to arrive at certainty (for the many of them declared to be absolutely impossible) much less to apply the results of their disputations to any one useful pur-

delivered without method or ornament, by a set of artless unlearned men, who only related what they had seen and heard, and proved the truth of what they said, not by fine-spun arguments, or florid declamations, but in a plain unfashionable kind of way, by sacrificing all that was dear to them, and laying down their lives in testimony to their doctrines. As far, indeed, as those doctrines were *new*, they would be well received. For the Athenians, as we learn from the highest authority, "spent their "time in nothing else but either to tell or "to hear some new thing."* When therefore St. Paul came to Athens, and preached to that celebrated school of philosophy "Jesus and the Resurrection," they were extremely ready to give him the hearing, and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this *new* doctrine "whereof thou speakest is? for thou "bringest certain *strange things* to our "ears." † But when they heard what these strange things were, BELIEF IN ONE SUPREME AUTHOR AND GOVERNOR OF THE WORLD, REPENTANCE, AMENDMENT OF LIFE, CHRIST CRUCIFIED AND RAISED FROM THE

* Acts xvii. 21. † Ib. xvii. 19, 20.

DEAD, A GENERAL RESURRECTION, A FUTURE JUDGMENT, (*strange things* indeed to the ears of an Athenian,) some "mocked him," laughed at the seeming incredibility of what he told them; others said, "We will hear "thee again of this matter *;" not probably with any view of enquiring into the evidence of *facts* (the very first and principal enquiry that was necessary to be made) but of entering into long and learned disquisitions on the nature and the fitness of the truths in which they were instructed. They expected to have all the difficulties relating to JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION cleared up to them in the most pleasing and satisfactory manner, to have all the reasons on which God acted laid open before them, and all his proceedings with mankind justified on the principles of human wisdom. Till this were done, the doctrine of CHRIST CRUCIFIED would always appear "foolishness to the Greeks." The pride of philosophy, and the self-sufficiency of learning, would never submit to believe that a man who suffered like a common malefactor could be a teacher sent from God; that the death of

* Acts xvii. 32.

" both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power " of God, and the wisdom of God."

The inferences I mean to draw from the preceding observations are these two that follow: —

I. The first is, that the friends of Revelation have no need to be disturbed or alarmed at a circumstance which has been sometimes dwelt upon with expressions of *surprise* and *concern*; namely, that all those virtuous and learned philosophers, who lived in the first ages of the Gospel, and " adorned the times in which they flourished, such as Seneca, the elder and the younger Pliny, Tacitus, Plutarch, Galen, Epictetus, and Marcus Antoninus, either overlooked or rejected the evidences of the Gospel; and that their language or their silence equally discovered their contempt for the Christians, who had in their time diffused themselves over the Roman empire."*

The simple fact, that these eminent men did not embrace Christianity is admitted; and *concerned*, undoubtedly, every compassionate mind must be at so unhappy an in-

* See the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. i. p. 516.

stance of perseverance in error; but whoever reflects on what has been said above, will not be much *surprised*, that CHRIST CRUCIFIED should be FOOLISHNESS to the *Roman* sage as well as to the *Greek*. That same philosophy which, we are told "had purified their minds from the prejudices of superstition," had substituted in their room certain *other* prejudices, that would effectually prevent them from embracing the Gospel, if ever they condescended to bestow a single thought upon it, or to make the least enquiry into it; which is far from being certain. Full of system and of science, of the all-sufficiency of reason, the dignity of human nature, and the absolute perfection of Stoical wisdom and virtue, they must needs regard with supercilious contempt an unsystematical and unscientifical religion, first promulged in an unpolished and unlettered corner of the world, by the son of a carpenter, who never studied at Athens or at Rome; preached afterwards by illiterate fishermen and mechanics, and received with eagerness by the illiterate populace. They would never endure a religion that rejected the aid of eloquence and learning, in the pursuit of which

they had spent their lives; a religion that laid open the weakness and depravity of the human heart, and the insufficiency of our own powers, either to lead us to a just knowledge of our duty, or support us in the due performance of it, without supernatural aid; which inculcated the necessity of a mediator, a redeemer, a sanctifier, and required the *very unphilosophical* virtues of meekness, humility, contrition, self-abasement, self-denial, renovation of heart and reformation of life; which taught the doctrines of a resurrection from the grave, and an eternal existence in another world, doctrines that appeared to them not only perfectly ridiculous, but even *impossible**; which "chose the foolish things "of the world to confound the *wise*," (a title peculiarly arrogated by the Stoics,) "and the "weak things of the world to confound the "things that are mighty†; casting down "imaginations, and every high thing that "exalteth itself against the knowledge of "God, and bringing into captivity every "thought to the obedience of Christ."‡ These were doctrines which not even a

* Acts xvii. 32. Plin. Nat. Hist. ii. 7.

† 1 Cor. i. 27. ‡ 2 Cor. x. 5.

Stoical *slave*, much less a Stoical *Emperor*, could ever submit to listen to with any degree of patience. Where then can be the wonder, that, on minds labouring under such strong prepossessions as these, neither the internal excellence, nor the external proofs, of the Christian Revelation could ever make the smallest impression?

II. The next inference I would offer to your consideration is, that although the doctrine *of Christ crucified* is one of those which are the most offensive to the philosophers and disputers of this world, yet we should not be in the least dismayed by their opposition to it; nor remit any thing of our diligence and earnestness in asserting the truth, and insisting on the importance, of this fundamental article of our faith. We have seen, that at the very first publication of the Gospel, this doctrine gave the utmost scandal to the pride of the Jew, and the wisdom of the Greek. We have seen, too, what little regard was paid to them by the great apostle of the Gentiles. The same prejudices do in some measure still subsist; and deserve to meet with the same treatment. There are *Jews* and *Greeks* still to be found in every Christian

country. *Unbelievers*, I mean, who in their way of thinking and reasoning on the subject of Revelation resemble both; who are, like the former, shocked at the seeming ignominy of the cross, and, like the latter, disgusted with the absurdity of supposing, that the sufferings and the death of an unoffending individual, and of one too that pretended to be nothing less than the Son of God, could in any way contribute to the salvation of a guilty world. It concerns not us to satisfy these fastidious reasoners. The only proper answer to them is, that our faith "does not "stand (and was not *designed* to stand) in the "wisdom of men, but in the power of God."* All that *we* have to do, is to content ourselves with facts, and to receive with thankfulness the doctrine of Redemption, as we find it delivered in the plain, and express, and emphatical words of Scripture. We may safely trust ourselves in the hands of God, and rely on *his* wisdom for the best methods of redeeming us. His dealings with mankind are truly *great* and *wise*, but he does not conduct himself on the principles of *worldly* grandeur, or *worldly* wisdom. On the con-

* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

trary, it is plainly his intention, in this and a thousand other instances, to humble, and mortify, and confound them both. We have, therefore, no reason to be afraid of either, "for the foolishness of God is wiser than "men, and the weakness of God is stronger "than men." *

Artful and ingenious cavillers will attempt to lead us into long disquisitions and subtle speculations on the subject. They will start innumerable difficulties, propose ensnaring questions, and urge us with a variety of seeming absurdities. But, unmoved by all their artifices, let us hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering, and without *philosophizing*. Unless we were admitted into the counsels of God, it is impossible for us to comprehend *all* the reasons which induced him to prefer that particular method of redeeming us which he has chosen. But yet what we *may* understand of it is sufficient to convince us, that it is admirably well calculated for the purposes which it seems designed to answer; and that although the doctrine of the cross is "to them that

* 1 Cor. i. 25.

"perish, foolishness," "yet to them that are "called," that is, to all who are sincerely disposed to embrace the offers of divine mercy made to them in the Gospel, it is, as the text affirms it to be, "CHRIST THE POWER "OF GOD, AND THE WISDOM OF GOD." To enter into the proof of this at large would require a volume. But the slightest and most superficial view of the subject will be sufficient to show, what great, and important, and seemingly opposite ends were answered by the death of Christ upon the cross.

By this extraordinary event, the power of death itself, and the dominion of Satan, "the prince of this world," were, as the Scriptures inform us, at once destroyed. * It gave occasion to that most astonishing miracle, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. It was a seal and confirmation of the new covenant of mercy between God and man, as covenants used anciently to be confirmed by sacrifices. It was a completion of the ancient prophecies concerning our Saviour, and reconciled that apparent contra-

* 2 Tim. i. 10. Heb. ii. 14.

diction between the description of his temporal sufferings and his spiritual glories, which so much perplexed and confounded the Jews. It taught mankind that hardest of all lessons (a lesson which is, God knows, but too necessary for every human being in his passage through the world,) to bear the cruelest indignities, the heaviest afflictions, and the acutest sufferings, with composure, patience, meekness, and resignation to the will of Heaven. It effected, what of all other things seemed the most difficult, the salvation of repenting sinners, without either punishing them, or weakening the authority of God's moral government; and, while it afforded assurance of pardon for past offences, gave no encouragement to future transgressions. And what completes the whole is, that this *doctrine of the cross*, which by the proud reasoners of that age was called *foolishness*, did notwithstanding make its way in the world with incredible rapidity, and produced such a reformation in the hearts and lives of men, as all the eloquence and subtilty of the greatest philosophers could never accomplish. When

we reflect on these things, we must surely allow, that although there may be many things in the doctrine of redemption to us inexplicable, yet it appears plainly, even from our imperfect conceptions of it, to have been a most eminent proof both of the wisdom and the power of God.

The more we examine into it, the more we shall be convinced of this great truth. But as there is now no time for any further enquiries of this nature, I shall dismiss the subject with this one observation — That there is so far from being any thing in the doctrine of the cross that ought to shock our understandings, or stagger our faith, that, on the contrary, it affords us the strongest evidences of the truth of our Saviour's pretensions. He well knew that the Jews expected in their Messiah a splendid victorious deliverer, and that the heathens loved to be amused with philosophical disputes and oratorical harangues. Had he therefore been an impostor, he would most certainly have accommodated his appearance and his doctrines to these expectations. But by teaching, living, suffering, and dying, in direct contradiction to these deep-

rooted prepossesions, he plainly showed that he depended not on the favour of man, but on the force of truth, and the power of God only, for the success of his mission. In the same manner, after his ascension, when the apostles found that the doctrine of *Christ crucified* gave the utmost offence to their hearers, was to the "Jews a stum-"bling-block and to the Greeks foolishness;" had they acted on the principles of mere worldly policy, they would quickly have changed their tone, would have dissembled, or softened, or concealed this obnoxious article. They would have made use of art and management, similar, perhaps, to that which the Jesuits in China are said to have adopted. It is a charge brought against those missionaries by some writers, and believed by others of considerable authority, that finding the people of that country exceedingly scandalized at the doctrine of a crucified Redeemer, they thought it prudent to deny that Christ was ever crucified. They affirmed, that it was nothing more than a calumny invented by the Jews, to throw a disgrace on Christianity. And what

did they gain by this ingenious piece of craft? Did they secure a better reception for the Gospel, and establish themselves more firmly in the good opinion of mankind? Alas! Christianity no longer exists in China, and they themselves no longer exist as a society. Such are the effects of worldly policy, and worldly wisdom. And had the apostles acted on the same principles, they would have met with the same success. But *they* pursued the maxims of "that wisdom which is from above." Undismayed by the offence taken at the doctrine of the cross, they continued to preach *Christ crucified.* They disdained all the little temporizing arts of accommodation, all unworthy compliances with the prejudices of mankind. They loudly declared to the whole world, that they believed the doctrine of the cross to be a divine truth, and that they thought it their bounden duty to persist in preaching it, without fear, without disguise, and without reserve. They were persuaded that God would some way or other take care to prosper his own work; and that, notwithstanding all opposition to

the contrary, " their labours should not be " in vain in the Lord." The event showed that their reasoning was just, and that they judged right in obeying God, rather than humouring the prejudices and caprices of men. The successful and triumphant manner in which the Gospel made its way, notwithstanding it went *bearing the cross* of its Divine Author, and had all the power, and wealth, and eloquence of the world to oppose it, was an irresistible proof, that it was the design of Providence, not " by the enticing words of man's wisdom, but by demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, to save them that believe; and, by what was called *the foolishness of the cross*, to destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."*

* 1 Cor. ii. 4., and i. 19.

SERMON XI.

JEREMIAH xviii. Part of 11th Verse.

THUS SAITH THE LORD; BEHOLD, I FRAME EVIL AGAINST YOU. RETURN YE NOW EVERY ONE FROM HIS EVIL WAY, AND MAKE YOUR WAYS AND YOUR DOINGS GOOD.

WE are now once more assembled together, to humble ourselves before Almighty God*: and, since we first met here for that purpose, a most awful and alarming change has taken place in the situation of our affairs. A few successes in the beginning have been followed by a series of misfortunes. Our dangers and distresses have multiplied on every side. All our efforts to extricate ourselves from the difficulties with which we are surrounded, have proved ineffectual. And the prospect

* On the general fast in 1779.

before us is, upon the whole, sufficiently dark and uncomfortable.

Let us turn our eyes from it to another object; to ourselves I mean, to our own conduct. Will that afford us any consolation? "When the judgments of the Lord "are in the earth," we are told that "the "inhabitants of the world will learn right-"eousness."* Have those judgments which now press so heavy upon us, taught us this most useful lesson? In proportion as our calamities have multiplied, has the warmth of our piety increased, and our sins and our follies melted away before it? Twice already have we, in this place, and on this very occasion, addressed ourselves to the Throne of Grace; have, with every appearance of sorrow and contrition, confessed our sins, and acknowledged that they have most deservedly brought down upon us the heaviest marks of God's displeasure. We have entreated pardon, we have besought compassion, we have implored assistance and protection; and in return have, in the most solemn manner, vowed

* Isaiah xxvi. 9.

repentance and reformation. Have that repentance and reformation followed? Has one single article of luxury been retrenched, (retrenched, I mean, from principle,) one favourite vice renounced, one place of amusement, one school of debauchery or of gaming, shut up? Do we keep a stricter guard upon all our irregular appetites and desires, and restrain them within the bounds of temperance, decency, and duty? Are the obligations of the nuptial vow more faithfully observed, and fewer applications made to the legislature for the dissolution of that sacred bond? Is there a more plain and marked difference in our behaviour towards the virtuous and the profligate; and have we set ourselves with greater earnestness to repress the bold effrontery of vice, by treating it, wherever it is found, with the indignation and contempt which it deserves? Are we become in any degree more religious, more devout, more disengaged from this world, more intent upon the next? Are our hearts touched with a livelier apprehension of heavenly things, with warmer sentiments of love and reverence for our Maker; and

do we demonstrate the sincerity of that love, by a more exact obedience to his commands, and a more serious regard to that sacred day, which is peculiarly dedicated to his service? Happy would it be for every one of us, could these questions be answered truly in the affirmative. But if they cannot, for what purpose have we again resorted to this solemnity? Do we think that the abstinence, the sorrow, or the supplications *of a day*, will avail us? In a country so enlightened as this is, it is impossible that any one can deceive himself with such imaginations as these. If we come here to say a form of prayer for mere form's sake; if our devotion is put on for the occasion, and put off the moment we leave this place; if we are serious for a few hours once in a year, and as dissipated as ever all the rest of our lives; such annual shows of piety, such periodical fits of devotion, instead of being a humiliation before God, are a mockery and insult upon him; and our very prayers will be among the sins for which we ought to beg forgiveness. The prayers to which HE listens, are those only that spring from a broken and a contrite

heart: the sorrow that HE accepts, is that only which worketh repentance; the abstinence which HE requires, is abstinence from sin. Unless we renounce each of us our own peculiar wickedness, our professions here do nothing; they do worse than nothing, they add hypocrisy to all our other sins. "This "people," says God on a similar occasion, "draw near to me with their mouth, and "with their lips do honour me, but have re- "moved their heart far from me: and their "fear towards me is taught by the precept "of men. Their goodness is as a morning "cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. "When they fast, I will not hear their cry, "and when they offer an oblation, I will not "accept them."* "Because I have called, "and ye refused; I have stretched out my "hand, and no man regarded; but ye have "set at nought my counsel, and would none "of my reproof: I also will laugh at your "calamity; I will mock when your fear "cometh; when your fear cometh as de- "solation, and your destruction cometh as "a whirlwind; when distress and anguish

* Isaiah xxix. 13. Hosea vi. 41. Jer. xiv. 12.

"cometh upon you: then shall they call "upon me, but I will not answer; they shall "seek me early, but they shall not find me: "for that they hated knowledge, and did "not choose the fear of the Lord."*

All this, I am aware, when applied to ourselves, will be considered by many as nothing more than the usual language of the pulpit; as a little pious declamation, necessary to be used on such occasions as this, but meaning nothing, and calculated only to strike superstitious minds, which see divine judgments in every common occurrence of life.

This is neither the time nor the place for entering into any controversy on such subjects. We are come here, I apprehend, not to dispute God's moral government of the world, but to acknowledge it. They who do not acknowledge it, have no concern here. Yet even these, when they happen to reflect a little seriously on what we were a very few years ago, and what we now are; when they consider the means by which this sudden and surprising revolution has been brought about;

* Prov. i. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

when they look back to the origin, and trace the whole progress of that unhappy contest in which we have been so long engaged, find themselves obliged to own, that there is something very extraordinary in it; that it has in many instances gone far out of the usual track of human affairs; that the causes generally assigned, are totally inadequate to the effects produced; and that it is altogether one of the most amazing scenes that was ever presented to the observation of mankind. They allow it is impossible to account, in any common way, for every thing that has happened in the various stages of it; and talk much of accident, ill fortune, and a certain strange fatality (as they call it) which seems to attend even our best-concerted measures. Let those who can, digest such reasoning as this, and disguise their ignorance of the truth, or their unwillingness to own it, under the shelter of unmeaning names, and imaginary beings of their own creation. But let us, who are, I trust, a little better informed, confess, what it is in vain to deny, *that the hand of God is upon us*; that we wanted humbling, and have been most severely humbled. The

successes of the last war* were too great for our feeble virtue to bear. The immense wealth that they poured in upon us from every quarter of the globe, bore down before it every barrier of morality and religion, and produced a scene of wanton extravagance and wild excess, which called loudly for some signal check; and that check it has now received. It would be the extremity of blindness not to see, in those calamities that have befallen us, the workings of that over-ruling Power "which chooses the "foolish things of the world to confound "the wise, and the weak things of the world "to confound the things that are mighty; "that no flesh should glory in his pre-"sence." † It is plainly the voice of God that speaks to us, in the sublime and tremendous language of Scripture; "Hear "this, thou that art full of stirs, a tumul-"tuous city, a joyous city; thou that art "given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, "and sayest in thine heart, I am, and none "else beside me: Though thou exalt thyself "as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest

* That which was concluded by the Peace of 1763.

† 1 Cor. i. 27. 29.

"among the stars, thence will I bring thee "down, saith the Lord. Can thy heart en- "dure, or can thy hands be strong, in the "days that I shall deal with thee? I the "Lord have spoken it, and will do it. I "will mingle a PERVERSE SPIRIT in the midst "of thee, I WILL CAUSE THEE TO ERR IN "EVERY WORK." *

Whether we have not thus ERRED, I leave you to judge; and if our errors are here referred to their right source, we know the remedy. It is, God be thanked, in our own hands: it is what this day's solemnity was meant to remind us of; it is what the text itself very distinctly points out to us. "Return ye now every one from his evil "way, and make your ways and your doings "good." Listen then, I beseech you, to this most salutary advice, and "humble "yourselves under the mighty hand of God, "that he may exalt you in due time." †

But is any one then (we shall be asked) so weak as to imagine, that immediate reformation will be followed by an immediate

* Isa. xxi. 2.; xlvii. 8. Obad. 4. Ezek. xxii. 14. Isa. xix. 14.
† 1 Pet. v. 6.

declaration of Heaven in our favour, and that the moment we become religious and virtuous, we shall be secured from danger, and rewarded with success? The best, indeed the only proper answer, to such a question as this, is — MAKE THE TRIAL. It may be made without either expense or hazard; and surely, in our present situation, every thing that affords the least shadow of relief deserves our notice. Expedient after expedient has been tried, and failed. Above all things, we have tried what IRRELIGION will do for us; and we have no reason, I think, to be proud of the experiment. It is then high time, surely, to discard a physician that has done us so little good, to make a change in our medicines, and put ourselves under a different regimen. And what other regimen can we adopt, but that which is recommended to us by the great Physician of our souls? It is RELIGION, "pure unde-"filed religion," that will strike at the root of our disorder, and nothing else can. To see its influence suddenly and universally restored, is more, perhaps, than we can expect. As the depravation of our manners,

and the decay of vital piety amongst us, has been a gradual work, the recovery of them must be so too. But let every one begin to do something towards it; let all parties and denominations of men, instead of inveighing against each other, without mercy and without end, reform themselves; and the restitution of religious sentiment, and virtuous practice, will not be so difficult an achievement as is imagined. It behoves us, in the first place, the ministers of the Gospel, from the highest to the lowest, to redouble our attention to every branch of our sacred functions, and to take the lead, as we are bound to do, in the great work of reformation. As an indispensable requisite towards it, let us be careful to impress deeply, both upon our own minds and those of our hearers, the absolute necessity of faith in Christ, of fervent love towards God, of internal sanctification by his Spirit; and on this foundation, the only solid and substantial one that can be laid, let us erect the superstructure of a holy, religious, Christian life. Let those who direct our public measures remember, that their success must, in a great degree, depend on the purity

and integrity, not only of their political, but of their moral and religious conduct; and that "except the Lord keep the city, the "watchman waketh but in vain."* If therefore they leave the Supreme Governor of the world out of their counsels, and form plans independent of him and his providence, there is but too much reason to fear that all the efforts of human wisdom and power, the most vigorous exertions of national strength, the best appointed fleets and armies, will avail them nothing; for "the battle is not theirs, but God's."† Let their opponents, on the other hand, be no less attentive to the regulation of their own hearts, than to the conduct of those who govern and contend with them not merely for the vain distinctions of rank, or wealth, or power, but for that noblest object of human ambition, pre-eminence in virtue. To all this, let those who are distinguished by their birth and fortune, add the weight, the almost irresistible weight, of their example; and manifest their public spirit in the most useful way they can, by letting

* Psalm cxxvii. 1. † 2 Chron. xx. 15.

the light of their truly illustrious conduct "shine before men," and by becoming models of every thing that is great and good. Let parents, in fine, while they are so anxious to embellish the manners, and improve the understandings, of their children, pay a little more attention than they have hitherto done, to the cultivation of their hearts. From their infancy to their manhood, let them be brought up "in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."* Let those grand corrupters of their unguarded innocence and simplicity, licentious NOVELS, licentious HISTORIES, and licentious systems of PHILOSOPHY, which (not to mention those of our own growth) have constituted a large and most pernicious branch of our commerce with a neighbouring kingdom; let these, I say, be for ever banished from the hands of our youth, and in their room, let that long-neglected, and almost forgotten thing, REVEALED RELIGION, make a fundamental part of their education. Let them not be left (as is too much, God knows, the case) to pick it up themselves as well as they can, from casual

* Ephes. vi. 4.

information, or a few superficial unconnected instructions; but let it be taught them systematically and methodically; let the first rudiments of it be instilled as early and as carefully into their minds, as those of every other science; let its evidences and its doctrines be gradually explained to them, in the several seminaries of learning through which they successively pass, in proportion as their judgments ripen, and their understandings unfold themselves. Let them, in short, be made not only great scholars, and accomplished gentlemen, but what is of infinitely more importance, both to themselves and to the public, honest men, and sincere Christians.

By means such as these, together with our most earnest prayers for the assistance of Divine Grace to co-operate with our own endeavours, there is little doubt but a great and a blessed change may in time be brought about, in the manners even of the present generation, and still more of the rising one. And when once the sense of religion is effectually awakened in our souls, we have every reason in the world to expect the happiest consequences from it.

The declarations of Scripture on this head are peremptory and decisive. "At "what instant" (says God) "I shall speak con- "cerning a nation, and concerning a king- "dom, to pluck up and to pull down, and "to destroy it, if that nation, against whom "I have pronounced, turn from their evil, "I will repent of the evil which I thought "to do unto them."* But, besides the reviving hopes which these promises may well inspire, there are other very important advantages that will naturally and spontaneously flow from a sincere belief in the doctrines, and a general obedience to the laws of the Gospel.

I. In the first place, true Christianity will produce TRUE PATRIOTISM AND PUBLIC SPIRIT. By its commanding influence over the soul, "it will keep under, and bring "into subjection†," all those irregular passions which render men rapacious, sordid, selfish, and corrupt, indifferent and inattentive to the public, devoted solely to the pursuit of some favourite object, or the gratification of some implacable resentment,

* Jer. xviii. 7, 8. † 1 Cor. ix. 27.

impossible that our divisions could have arisen to their present alarming height. But the misfortune is, we are apt to think ourselves dispensed with, in matters of state, from all those rules of morality, which, in every other case, we deem it our duty to observe; and, what is quite astonishing and unaccountable, the very same persons, who in private life are considerate, reasonable, impartial, good-natured, and humane, will in public affairs be impetuous, vehement, acrimonious, censorious, ungenerous, and unjust. On what grounds they establish this strange distinction, and why they conceive all the obligations of Religion to hold good in the one case, and entirely to vanish in the other, is to me, I own, utterly incomprehensible. The Gospel, I am sure, knows nothing of any such exceptions as these. It lays down the same rules of behaviour for all men, in all relations and circumstances of life; and grants no dispensation, in any one supposable instance, from the eternal and invariable laws of evangelical rectitude. It is CHARITY, in short, true Christian Charity, diffusing itself through our whole conduct, public as well

as private, that can alone restore harmony and union to this distracted kingdom. Let her mild, conciliating voice be once heard and attended to by all ranks of men, and she will say to their ruffled passions, as our Saviour did to the troubled waves, "Peace, "be still:" and the consequences will be the same; "there will be a great calm."*

Lastly, a consciousness of having discharged our duty, of being at peace with God, and of living under his gracious superintendence, will give us a SPIRIT, A FIRMNESS AND INTREPIDITY OF SOUL, which nothing else can inspire.

VALOUR, indeed, it has been said, is no Christian virtue; and it is very true; for, considered simply in itself, it is no virtue at all. It is a mere personal quality, depending principally on constitution and natural temperament, but improved by education, discipline, and habit; and can be no otherwise moral or immoral, than as it is well or ill directed. But, supposing all other circumstances equal, the sincere Christian will have many incitements to face danger with a steady countenance, which

* Mark iv. 39.

SERMON XII.

MATT. x. 34.

THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO SEND PEACE ON EARTH; I CAME NOT TO SEND PEACE BUT A SWORD.

WE may, without the smallest hesitation, conclude, that the words of the text cannot possibly have that signification, which at the first view, and as they here stand single and unconnected, they appear to have. It would be the extremity of weakness to suppose, that he whose whole life and doctrine breathed nothing but peace and gentleness, and who declared at another time, in the most positive terms, that "he came not to destroy men's lives, "but to save them*," should here mean

* Luke ix. 56.

to denounce war and desolation to the human species. And that, in fact, this is not the real import of the words before us, will be evident to any one who considers, with the least degree of attention, the whole passage from which they were taken, and the occasion on which they were spoken. It will be evident that they relate solely to the *first preachers of the Gospel*, to whom our Lord was then delivering their evangelical commission; and were intended to apprize them of the calamities and persecutions to which the execution of that commission would infallibly expose them. "They were sent forth as sheep among "wolves; they were to be delivered up to "the councils, to be scourged in the syna-"gogues, to be brought before governors "and kings, to be hated of all men for "Christ's sake*:" a treatment so totally opposite to that which their early prejudices led them to expect under the Messiah, THE PRINCE OF PEACE †, that it was highly necessary to set them right in this important point; and to forewarn them in plain terms, that although the *ultimate* effect of

* Matt. x. 16—22. † Isaiah ix. 6.

ndeed be PEACE in its
l in every sense of the
those who were charged
romulgation of the Gospel,
not *peace* but a *sword.*
ever interpretation may be given
ords, say the adversaries of our
y are eventually applicable to
nity in their most obvious meaning.
ospel did in fact *send a sword*, and a
destructive one, upon earth. It has deluged the world with blood. It has been the parent of as much misery and devastation as if it had been purposely intended to harass and torment mankind, and has given rise to more dissensions, wars, and massacres, than any other single cause that can be named. *

This, it must be owned, is a formidable charge. But formidable as it is, and

* This argument is so great a favourite with all our philosophical sceptics, that it is every day dressed up in some new form, and repeated incessantly with an air of peculiar triumph and exultation. It is indeed in its very nature calculated to strike more generally, and to make deeper impressions, than any abstract reasoning; and has, I believe, in fact, created stronger prejudices against the Gospel, than all the other cavils of infidelity put together. For these reasons it seemed to deserve particular consideration.

heightened, as it seldom fails to be, with all the invidious colourings of false rhetoric and false wit, we need not fear to meet it in its full force. It will, I apprehend, be no difficult matter to convince every dispassionate inquirer, that when it is examined more closely and minutely, when it is divested of all the adventitious terrors with which it has been so industriously surrounded, and when all the abatements and deductions are made, which truth demands and candour must admit, it will be reduced to an objection of little or no importance.

I. Whenever the cruelties exercised by Christians against unbelievers, or against each other, are mentioned, it is generally insinuated, at the same time, that they are not to be paralleled in any other religious persuasion, and that it was Christianity which first introduced the detestable practice of persecuting on account of religion. But how unfair such representations are, the most superficial acquaintance with history is sufficient to convince us. From the remotest ages down to the present, men of almost every sect and persuasion have treated those of contrary sen-

timents with no small degree of bitterness and inhumanity. It is well known, that Jews, Pagans, and Mahometans, have each in their turn made use of violence and coercion in matters of religion; and that the early Christians suffered the severest persecution from the two former, long before they began to inflict it on others. This indeed is no vindication of those Christians that had recourse to it; nor is it intended as such. Nothing ever *can* vindicate or justify them. But it may serve to show that others ought to bear a large share of that odium which is generally thrown exclusively on the disciples of Christ; and that it is not Christianity, but human nature, that is chargeable with the guilt of persecution. * The truth is, religion, or *the*

* Even Pagans have persecuted Pagans on the score of religion, with the utmost bitterness and rancour. Besides the memorable instance of Socrates, and the several *holy or sacred wars* among the Grecian states, which had *some mixture* of superstitious zeal in them, we find that in Egypt the worship of different deities produced the most implacable hatred and most sanguinary contests between their respective votaries; that in Persia the disciples of every other religion except that of Zoroaster were punished, and almost exterminated, with the utmost cruelty: and that in

pretence of religion, has, in almost all ages and all nations, been *one* cause, among many others, of those numberless dissensions and disputes which have laid waste the species; and although it may be matter of surprise to some, and of indignation to all, that what was intended for the protection and solace of mankind, should be converted to their destruction, yet it may be accounted for on the most common principles of human conduct.

The attachment of men to any particular object will always increase according to the real or supposed value of that object; and their zeal in defending it from injury or corruption will rise in the same proportion. Hence religion, which has ever been esteemed the most important of all human concerns, has for that very reason given the keenest edge to human resentments, and

later times the kings of Siam and Pegu contended for the honour of possessing a certain sacred relique (of a nature too contemptible to be named here), with as much fury and obstinacy as if the safety of their whole kingdoms, and every thing valuable to them, had been at stake. See *Plutarch in Solon. Thucyd. l.* i. *Juvenal, Sat.* xv. *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol.* i. *p.* 208., and *Mickle's Translation of the Lusiad of Camoens, Introduct. p.* 94. *note.*

has wound up the passions of men to a degree of frenzy, to which no motive of less weight was capable of raising them. And yet, at the same time, if we compare the dissensions and cruelties occasioned by *civil zeal* with those occasioned by *religious zeal*, we shall find the latter to bear a much less proportion to the former than is generally imagined, and frequently insinuated.* By far the greatest number of wars, as well as the longest, most obstinate, most extensive, and most sanguinary wars we know of, have been owing to causes *purely political*, and those too sometimes of the most trifling nature; and if we can allow men to harass and destroy one another for a mere point of honour, or a few acres of land, why should we think it strange to see them defending, with the same heat and bitterness, what they conceive to be the most essential requisite to happiness, both here and hereafter? If we

* "*Political Society*, on a moderate calculation, has been "the means of murdering several times the number of inha-"bitants now upon the earth." See that admirable piece of irony, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, by the late Mr. Edmund Burke; in which the argument against Christianity, drawn from the mischiefs occasioned by religious bigotry and persecution, is most ingeniously and completely overthrown.

will but consider religion in that single point of view, which is the only one that has any relation to this question, *as an object which men have very much at heart;* and will admit the operation of the same passions and prejudices as are excited by any *other* object that they have at heart, we shall no longer be at a loss for the source of those mischiefs that have been ascribed to it.

II. As the nature of the human mind furnishes a very obvious reason for religious bigotry, and cruelty in general, so may we, from the peculiar circumstances and situation of the earlier Christians, account for the origin of *their* propensity to it in particular.

Excess of happiness, or excess of misery, is frequently observed to give a savage turn to the temper. From the one, the mind is apt to contract a kind of hardness, and from the other a wantonness, which render it equally insensible to the feelings of humanity. It was from the agonies of a death-bed, amidst the pains of a most loathsome disease, and the still more insupportable torments of a wounded conscience, looking back on a life full of iniquity, that Herod gave orders for all the principal Jews to be massacred the

moment he expired.* And it was, on the contrary, from the midst of a luxurious and a voluptuous court, abounding with every thing that could minister to ease, magnificence, and delight, that the scourge of the last century, Louis the XIVth, gave orders for turning into a desert the country of a prince, whose only crime it was to be his enemy.† So similar are the effects which flow from these two opposite extremes.

Both these extremes the Christian church experienced, about the time we are speaking of, and, what was still more trying, experienced them in a very quick succession. The members of that church, from being persecuted, tormented, afflicted, and treated as the off-scourings of the earth, became on a sudden the lords of it. Some, perhaps, *may* have fortitude enough to support great misery, or, what is perhaps no less difficult, extreme happiness, without any injury to

* Joseph. Antiq. l. xvii. c. 6.

† Voltaire, though a Frenchman, and of course an admirer of Louis, yet speaks of this barbarous devastation of the Palatinate in the terms it deserves. The natural and affecting picture he draws of that shocking scene must strike every heart with horror. *Essai sur l'Hist. Générale, t.* v. *c.* 16.

their tempers. But it is very few that can bear a rapid transition from the one to the other, from indigence, distress, and oppression, to ease, security, and power. It was too much for the disciples even of the meek and humble Jesus. One might have thought, perhaps, that upon the civil establishment of their religion, the recent sense of their own sufferings would have taught them a lesson of mildness and moderation towards others. But it unhappily taught them the very same lesson that it has generally taught to every other people in the same circumstances, in all ages of the world. For it is a fact too notorious to be denied, that in most contentions for superiority, whether religious or civil, the suffering party, when raised to power by a reverse of fortune, has scarce ever failed to adopt that inhumanity under which they so lately groaned; and it is not so much oppression that is crushed, as the oppressor that is changed. Every one will, upon this occasion, recall to mind the well-known sanguinary struggles for power between the two rival states of Greece, and the still more sanguinary revolutions in the latter periods of the Roman republic;

where the only contest seemed to be, which should exceed the other in cruelty; and where the remembrance of former massacres was obliterated, not by acts of mercy and forgiveness, but by massacres still more furious and unrelenting, by the almost entire annihilation of the vanquished faction.

When, therefore, our adversaries say that the Christians made no other use of the new-acquired assistance of the civil arm, than to harass one another, and oppress their enemies, what else do they say, than that Christians were men; that they only did what *men of all religions and denominations* have commonly done under the same circumstances and temptations; and that the spirit of the Gospel was lost in the corruption of human nature.*

* We find that even Julian, the *philosophic* Julian, though not a Christian, yet by some means or other became a most zealous bigot and persecutor. He was of opinion, it seems, that a *frantic patient* (that is, a Christian) might sometimes be cured by *salutary violence*. He applied this remedy himself with no small degree of alacrity and vigour, and in some parts of his dominions allowed his provincial ministers to exercise the most brutal acts of cruelty towards the Christians with impunity, nay sometimes with applause. He even added insult to oppression. He condescended to employ against the *detested Galileans* (as he was pleased to call the Christians) the acrimony of his imperial pen, and made

It might have been expected, indeed, that the excellence of their religion would have restrained them from the common excesses of their species, and rendered them as much superior to other men in humanity and tenderness, as the benevolence of the Gospel was to that of every other religious institution in the world, And certain it is that Christianity did by degrees soften and mitigate the ferocity of the human mind. But this was not to be done on the sudden, in large bodies of men and extensive empires. It could not, without a miracle, instantaneously change the temper of the times, and bring about in a moment an entire revolution in the prevailing disposition and established character of those ages. The Roman emperors and their armies had for many centuries been accustomed to vio-

---

them feel not only the whole weight of his sovereign power, but the utmost severity of his *ironical and sarcastic wit*. The causes of those instances of intolerance are not surely to be sought for in the religion of Christ. See Mr. Gibbon's Hist. of the Decline, &c. vol. ii. p. 370. to 409. The *philosophers* were the chief instigators of the persecution of the Christians under Diocletian; and Mr. Hume acknowledges, that the most refined and *philosophic* sects are constantly the most intolerant. With what justice then can "*philosophy* alone boast that her gentle hand is able to eradicate from the human mind the latent and deadly principle of fanaticism?" Ib. vol. i. ch. 8. n. 24.; vol. ii. p. 505.; and vol. i. p. 560.

lence, war, dissension, and tumult. They had been accustomed also to see every thing bend to their power, and obey their commands. When, therefore, they became legislators in RELIGION, as well as in every thing else, they would carry the same ideas along with them, even into that subject. They would expect a submission as complete and absolute in that point as in every other; and, if the smallest resistance was made to their sovereign will and pleasure, they would be very apt to apply the same means to subdue stubborn consciences, which they had found so successful in subduing provinces and kingdoms. Thus did force come to be considered as the properest and most effectual argument in religious as well as in civil contests. The ecclesiastics would naturally be carried away in the general current, with all the other subjects of the Roman empire, and adopt the predominant sentiments and habits of their countrymen. And it would require a considerable length of time, and much juster conceptions of the true character and genius of the Gospel than many of its teachers then entertained, to correct those inveterate prejudices, and subdue those turbulent pas-

sions, which had taken such firm hold upon their minds.

III. With these obstacles in the way, it was hardly possible for the mild and benevolent principles of Christianity to produce any *immediate* effect. And their operation was most unfortunately still further obstructed by another cause which took place in the succeeding ages. Those northern barbarians, who, not long after the civil establishment of Christianity, invaded and overran the western empire, brought in with them a spirit of cruelty and martial violence, which was propagated with their dominions, and communicated from the conquerors to those they conquered. Their savage manners added fresh fuel to that sternness of disposition which had descended to the Christians of those ages from their Roman ancestors. At the same time, by declaring open war against all learning, sacred or profane, they in a great measure precluded those whom they had vanquished from the only effectual remedy that could be applied to that barbarity which they taught them. They rendered it almost impossible for them to acquire a complete

knowledge and a right apprehension of the true temper of the Gospel, whose mild and gracious influence could alone rectify their errors and purify their hearts. No wonder, then, that when this influence was in a great measure lost, when the Scriptures were shut up in an unknown tongue, when the cultivation of letters, and especially of all critical and biblical learning, was at an end, when Gothic brutality was ingrafted on Roman fierceness, and every thing tended to inflame and exasperate the most furious passions of the soul; no wonder that the beneficent genius of Christianity could not operate with its full and genuine force on the manners of those times. Yet still, notwithstanding all those disadvantages, when the barbarians themselves became converts to the faith, it did in fact produce an effect, which no other cause was powerful enough to produce; it mollified, in many important instances, the ferocious temper of those savage conquerors, who were thus in their turn subdued by the religion of those very enemies whom they had vanquished in the field. * And though, for the reasons above

* See Hist. of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. iii. pp. 533. 633.

assigned, the spirit of intolerance continued to prevail, and even gradually to gain ground; yet it was not till about the beginning of the thirteenth century, in which darkness and barbarity overspread the face of the whole earth, that this evil arrived at its utmost height. It was not till then that the inhuman wars against the Albigenses first began, that Christendom became for a long time one continued scene of desolation, that persecution was reduced to a regular system, and murder made legal by that dreadful instrument of human fury, the Inquisition; in all which, Christianity had just as much share, as ignorance, enthusiasm, bigotry, and superstition, have in the composition of genuine Christianity. * And although to us these wild excesses of mistaken zeal do now justly appear in the most odious colours, yet, as they were only of a piece with the general practice of those ages in *other* instances, they did not *then* excite in the minds of men any peculiar degree of astonishment or horror. At a

* Most of the bitter invectives, and eloquent declamations of both foreign and domestic philosophers, against the mischievous effects of religion, are not objections to *Christianity*, but to *popery*; and though they may embarrass a Romish divine, yet seldom create any difficulty to a Protestant one.

time when military ideas predominated in every thing, in the form of government, in the temper of the laws, in the tenure of lands, and even in the administration of justice itself, it could not be matter of much surprise that the church should become military too. And to those who were accustomed to see (as they then frequently did) a civil right or a criminal charge, nay, even an abstract point of law*, decided by a combat or a fiery ordeal, instead of a legal trial, it would not seem at all extraordinary to teach men Christianity by fire and faggot, instead of argument and reason.

IV. There is still another very material consideration to be taken into the account. It is beyond a doubt, that a large part of those dissensions, wars, and massacres, which have been usually styled religious, and with the entire guilt of which Christianity has been very unjustly loaded, have been altogether, or at least in a great measure, owing to political causes. Nothing has been more common, in all ages, than to see faction and ambition assuming the mask of religion, and

* Some very curious instances of this may be seen in Dr. Robertson's History of Charles V. vol. i. note 22. p. 348. 8vo.

pretending to fight in the cause of God and his church when they had in reality nothing else in view but to create confusion or establish tyranny. It is well known, for instance, that the Crusades themselves, which are generally styled, by way of eminence, the HOLY WARS, took their rise not from zeal for the Gospel, or reverence for the Holy Land, but from the ambition, avarice, and rapacity, of two most turbulent Pontiffs*; that the war of the League, and other civil wars in France, which were commonly supposed to have religion for their only subject, were in fact originally kindled, and principally fomented, by the restless intrigues and personal resentments of the princes of the blood, and other great leaders of opposite factions †; and that the dreadful distractions in this country, during the last century, were not (as one of our historians affirms ‡) owing *chiefly* to religious controversy, but to political causes. By what he calls, *the infusion of theological hatred*, the

* Gregory the VIIth, and Urban the IId.

† See *Davila* throughout; but particularly B. i. and vi., in which he investigates with great sagacity the secret springs of those disturbances.

‡ Hume, Hist. of England, 4to. vol. v. p. 255.

sore was not *made*, but only *inflamed*; and although Cromwell, with much solemnity, affected in every stage of his guilty progress, to be only *seeking the Lord*, yet it soon appeared that he was in truth *seeking*, what he ultimately obtained, the subversion of the constitution, and the acquisition of sovereign power.

From these, and innumerable other instances of a similar nature, which might be produced, it is evident that difference of opinion in matters of faith has much oftener been the *ostensible* than the *real* cause of the calamities which have been ascribed to it. But were we even to allow that it has been the true and only source of those calamities, yet still the Gospel itself stands perfectly clear of all blame on this account. Whatever mischief persecution may have done in the world, (and it has, God knows, done full enough,) it was not Christ, but some mistaken followers of Christ, that brought this sword upon earth; and it would be as injurious to ascribe to Revelation the false opinions and wrong practices of its disciples, however pernicious, as to impute to the physician the fatal mistakes of those

who administered his medicines. The very best laws are liable to be perverted and misinterpreted. It was the fate of the evangelical law to be so. Its spirit was misunderstood, and its precepts misapplied, by some of its avowed friends, and its authority made use of as a cloak for cruelty and oppression by some of its secret enemies. But the Gospel all the while was guiltless of this blood. It disclaimed and abhorred such unnatural supports, which it was as far from wanting as it was from prescribing; it authorized the use of no other means of conviction but gentleness and persuasion; and if any of its disciples were, by a misguided zeal, betrayed into violent and sanguinary measures, the blame is all their own, and it is *they* must answer for it, not Jesus or his religion.*

V. That this is a true representation of the case, appears not only from the example and the declarations of our Divine Lawgiver, and the endless exhortations in the sacred writings, to peace, love, mercy, compassion, and brotherly kindness towards all men; but from this consideration also, that in pro-

* To impute crimes to Christianity is the act of a novice. — See the King of Prussia's Works, vol. xi. p. 171.

as the Scriptures came to be more
d Christianity of course better
tolerance lost ground conti-
w less violent in every suc-
And no sooner did the revival
ers, and the reformation of some
arts of the Christian church, disperse that Egyptian darkness in which all Europe had been so long involved, than juster notions, and milder sentiments of religion, began immediately to take place. That hideous spectre PERSECUTION, which had terrified all the world during the night of universal ignorance, now shrunk at the approach of day: and when, upon the translation of the Bible into several languages then in vulgar use, every Protestant, with delight and astonishment, heard the Scriptures speak to him *in his own tongue wherein he was born* *, he immediately felt the heavenly influence upon his soul; and, as the sacred writings opened more and more upon him, found his heart gradually melt within him into tenderness, compassion, and love towards every human being, of whatever denomination, party, sect, or persuasion.

* Acts ii. 8.

VI. From that time to the present, the divine principle of charity has been continually acquiring fresh strength. In every reformed, that is, in every enlightened country, the native mildness of Christianity has evidently shown itself in a greater or a less degree; and by subduing, or at least greatly mitigating the spirit of intolerance, has demonstrated to all the world, that the genuine tendency of its doctrines and its precepts, when rightly understood, is not to bring *destruction* but *peace* upon earth. These happy consequences of a better acquaintance with Revelation, seem to be gradually making their way into other kingdoms. Even that church which was the original parent, and is still in some countries the chief support, of persecution, has of late appeared to feel some small relentings of humanity, and to abate a little of its native implacability. One of the firmest supports of its tyranny, the society of Jesuits, is now no more, and many other of its religious communities are approaching gently to their dissolution.*

* In France, Germany, Venice, and many parts of Italy, several religious houses have within the last ten or twenty years been suppressed. Smaller communities have been

In two of the most bigoted and superstitious countries of Europe*, the Inquisition has not of late years exhibited any of those public spectacles of cruelty and horror, with which it used formerly to astonish all the world. In some places it has lost or laid aside almost all its terrors; and in other Popish kingdoms the Protestants are said to enjoy a much greater degree of security and ease than they have known for many years.† These circumstances seem to indicate, that the odious spirit of intolerance is almost every where dying away, and that the whole Christian world is gradually approaching to that liberal and merciful way of thinking which is so conformable to the precepts of their divine Master, and so essential to the mutual comfort and tranquillity

---

thrown together. In some, none are allowed to take the vows under a certain age, nor to give up to the convent more than a certain part of their property; others are absolutely forbid to admit any more novices.

* Spain and Portugal.

† In Poland, France, Bohemia, and Hungary. In the two last, as well as in all the other Austrian dominions, the Emperor Joseph has taken very decisive steps towards a complete toleration, and an almost entire renunciation of the papal jurisdiction within his territories.

of all his disciples. Certain at least it is, that in every country where the Reformation has made its way, the more Christianity has been studied, and its true nature and disposition developed, the more benevolent and merciful it has constantly appeared to be. The Church of England, in particular, has been distinguished no less for the moderation and lenity of its conduct than for the purity of its doctrines. And although, after it had shaken off the galling yoke of Popery, it could not on a sudden divest itself of all its ancient hereditary prejudices; although it was a considerable length of time before it could fancy itself secure against the Protestant separatists, without that body-guard of pains and penalties with which it had been accustomed to see itself, as well as every church in Europe, surrounded; yet even in the plentitude of its authority, and when its ideas and its exercise of ecclesiastical discipline were at the highest, it stands chargeable with fewer acts of extreme and extravagant severity than any other established church, of the same magnitude and power, in the whole Christian world. By degrees, however, as it improved

in knowledge it improved in mildness too. The last century saw *the beginning*, and the present times have seen *the farther extension*, of a most noble system of religious liberty, which has placed legal toleration on its true basis; a measure no less consonant to sound policy than to the spirit of Christianity, and from which we may reasonably promise ourselves the most pacific and salutary effects. Let us then continue to maintain the character we have so justly acquired, of being the great supporters of religious freedom and the sacred rights of conscience; let us make allowances for the natural prejudices of those who differ from us, and "forbear one another in love." There is, indeed, something very delightful in the idea of the whole Christian world uniting in every article of faith and practice, and agreeing no less in inward sentiment than in outward form. But this, I fear, is a visionary scene of unity and concord, which we have no reason to expect from any promises of Scripture, and still less from any principles of human nature. But there is an unity very consistent with the one, and very forcibly recommended by

the other, " the unity of the spirit in the " bond of peace."* This is that truly Christian bond, which, linking together every heart, leaves every judgment free, and from the seeming discord of many different parts, makes up the entire consent and harmony of the whole.

By a conduct formed on these genuine scriptural principles, we shall give the most effectual answer to the great objection which has been here combated, and the fullest confirmation to the several propositions that have been advanced, and I trust established in this discourse. We shall confute by *example*, as well as by argument, the heavy charges of cruelty which have been so often urged against the religion we profess. We shall show (in perfect conformity to the preceding observations) that these cruelties are in fact no just ground of reproach to the Gospel; that they are imputable only to those who have totally misapprehended or wilfully perverted its doctrines and its precepts; that the constitutional temper of the Christian Revelation is not SEVERITY, but MERCY; and that although this was

* Ephes. iv. 3.

for a while obstructed or suspended by the operation of adventitious causes, and the influence of local and accidental circumstances, yet these having now either wholly ceased, or lost much of their original force, the divine benevolence of our religion has evidently begun, in this and many other countries, to produce its genuine effects. And we have every reason to believe, that, as scriptural knowledge advances, these effects will diffuse themselves, though perhaps by slow degrees, over the whole Christian world; that "the kingdom of God" shall finally appear to be, in a temporal as well as a spiritual sense, what the Scriptures affirm it to be, JOY AND PEACE*; and the effect of righteousness, QUIETNESS AND ASSURANCE FOR EVER.†

* Rom. xiv. 17. † Isaiah xxxii. 17.

SERMON XIII.

LUKE ii. 14.

ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD-WILL TOWARDS MEN.

THE sacred hymn, of which the text is a part, is that which the heavenly host were heard to sing at the birth of Christ; and the meaning of the words is generally allowed to be, That this great event would be productive of peace to all the inhabitants of the earth, and was a most striking proof of God's good-will to mankind.

One cannot help observing with what solemnity our blessed Redeemer was introduced into the world. He had not indeed any of this world's pomp to follow him. The grandeur that attended him was, like his kingdom, of a spiritual nature; and it was a grandeur which shamed the pride of

earthly magnificence. He was welcomed into life by the united congratulations of those celestial spirits, whose abodes he had just quitted, to take upon him the form of a man. It is the only event recorded in history that was ever dignified with such rejoicings, except that of the creation. When the "corner-stone" of the earth was laid, the sacred writers tell us "that the "morning stars sang together, and all the "sons of God shouted for joy."* This *corner stone* † of the *new creation* was laid with the same solemnity. It should seem that these were the only two occasions which deserved so glorious a distinction; and that the redemption of mankind appeared to the heavenly host to be a work no less glorious to God, and beneficial to man, than their creation. It is indeed in this light that the Scriptures do all along consider it. They represent it as a *new creation* ‡, as an entrance upon *a new life* §, as the production of a *new man* ‖, and

* Job xxxviii. 6, 7.
† Eph. ii. 20.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15.
§ Rom. i. 4.
‖ Eph. iv. 24. Col. iii. 10.

frequently speak of it in terms that have a manifest allusion to the first formation of all things. Christ himself is called THE LIGHT of this new world*; and, as the *power and wisdom* of God are "clearly seen in the "things that are made †," in the *natural* world, so, in reference to the *spiritual* world, our Lord is in a still more emphatical manner styled THE POWER OF GOD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD. ‡ And indeed, if to form the goodly fabric of this globe out of a confused heap of jarring elements, to raise up man from the dust of the ground, and breathe into him a living soul, were a most lively display of God's infinite wisdom and power, it was surely no less striking a proof of those divine attributes, to find out a way of reconciling his justice and his mercy, of bringing peace and salvation out of guilt and misery, and "quickening us again when "dead in trespasses and sins." § And as our redemption was no less glorious to God than our creation, so neither was it less beneficial to man. We should have had but little reason to rejoice in our creation, had not

* John viii. 12.
† Rom. i. 20.
‡ 1 Cor. i. 24.
§ Ephes. ii. 1.

God once more "created us to good works."* Christianity threw open to us another and a better world, "a new heaven and a new "earth †;" it restored to us the only things that could make existence worth possessing, the favour of God, the means of happiness, and the hopes of immortality.

It is worthy also of observation, that this mode of celebrating the birth of our Redeemer was most remarkably adapted to the character of the Messiah, and the nature of the commission with which he was charged. The ancient historians frequently affected to usher in the birth of warriors and conquerors with portents and prodigies of a dreadful nature; commendable in this, at least, that their fictions were well suited to their personages, the enemies and destroyers of mankind. The friend and Saviour of mankind was introduced into the world with declarations of universal peace and good-will. And in this the angels only speak the constant language of Scripture in describing the Messiah. They speak of him in a manner in which he loves to speak of himself, in which the prophets

* Ephes. ii. 10. † 2 Pet. iii. 13.

spoke of him before, and the apostles after him. He is called by Isaiah "THE PRINCE "OF PEACE." "Of the increase of his "government and peace there is said to be "no end." * A little after, his reign is described by the most pacific emblems that imagination could furnish, by "the wolf "dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard "lying down with the kid." † His work of righteousness is peace ‡, and he makes with mankind the covenant of peace. § He himself tells his disciples, that "in him "they were to have peace ‖;" and it is the legacy he bequeaths them. "Peace I leave "with you, my peace I give unto you." ¶ The sacred writers continue the same language in the New Testament. "The king-"dom of God is joy and peace." ** His Gospel is called "the Gospel of peace††;" and it is their constant salutation to the persons and churches to which they write. So remarkable a frequency and agreement in the use and application of this word, naturally raise our curiosity to inquire into

* Isaiah ix. 6, 7. † Ib. xi. 6. ‡ Ib. xxxii. 17.
§ Ib. liv. 10. ‖ John xvi. 33. ¶ John xiv. 27.
** Rom. xiv. 17. †† Ib. x. 15.

the meaning of it, and make it worth our while to inquire in what sense or senses Christ may be said *to have brought peace upon earth:* which will lead us to the proof of the latter part of the text, that his birth was a most remarkable instance *of God's good-will to mankind.*

I. The first and most important sense in which our Lord may be said to have brought us *peace*, was, by taking upon him the sins of the world, and thereby making *our peace with God*, and in consequence of this, giving us *that peace of mind* which the world could not give. "He is our peace," says the apostle, "that he might reconcile us to "God." * "The chastisement of our peace "was upon him." † "Being justified by "faith, we have peace with God through "our Lord Jesus Christ." ‡ Expressions of this and the like import are so frequent in Scripture, that it is impossible for the most ingenious criticism to elude their force. They evidently prove, that the PEACE which our Saviour "brought on "earth," was in its primary acceptation of a *spiritual* nature; that when we were

* Eph. ii. 14. 16. † Isaiah liii. 5. ‡ Rom. v. 1.

at enmity with God, our peace was made with him by the death of his Son; that he gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God*; and that this is the chief point of view in which his divine mission is considered in Scripture. And no wonder that it should be so; for it was this of which mankind stood in the greatest need, and which natural religion was least able to afford. Whatever pretensions reason might make to the knowledge of a future state, or a complete rule of moral conduct, yet, to find out what atonement God would be pleased to accept for the sins of the whole world, was a discovery which exceeded the utmost stretch of her abilities. That *some* expiation was necessary, the Heathens plainly saw. They saw, that if there was a God, he must be pleased with virtue, and offended with vice. They perceived that they were *not* virtuous, and therefore could not be in favour with God. They seem even to have wanted the first and fundamental requisite to tranquillity, an assurance that pardon was on *any* terms to be obtained. Their Jupiter was armed with

* Heb. ix. 26.; x. 12.

thunder and lightning; he had the ministers of his vengeance always at hand, but they had no emblems by which they were accustomed to express his *mercy*. There was indeed a *possibility*, perhaps a probability, that the Deity *might* pardon their offences; but there was also a possibility that he might *not*; and the very *possibility* of being exposed to the resentment of a being, without mercy and without control, was enough to sink them into despair. But whatever hopes they might have of appeasing the Deity by proper means, they could have but little (as I before observed) of finding out those means. The sacrifice of animals was the atonement on which they principally depended (a plain proof, by the way, that the necessity of *some* animal sacrifice was an idea deeply rooted in the hearts of men); but they were not always satisfied even with this. Having perfect confidence in nothing, they tried every thing. They ran from one expedient to another, and, like men ready to perish, catched at every thing that seemed to afford the least shadow of relief. Hence that incredible number of deities, temples, altars, festivals, games, sacrifices,

supplications, processions, and, in short, that infinite variety of ceremonies and superstitions, which served plainly to *show* their uneasiness, but not at all to *remove* it.

Here, then, the Gospel gave us PEACE, where nothing human could. From this we know that God is merciful, long-suffering, and of great goodness. We know that he is reconciled to us by the death of his Son: we are acquainted also with the means of preserving that favour which Christ procured for us; and there is no longer added to the misery of guilt, the torment of not knowing how to expiate it. We are assured, "that Jesus is the Lamb of God which "taketh away the sin of the world: that he "came to seek and to save that which was "lost: and that whosoever believeth in him "shall not perish, but have everlasting "life." * In this respect, therefore, that is, in the most important of all human concerns, the meanest man amongst us has more true content and peace, and satisfaction of mind †, than all the learning and

* John i. 29. Matt. xviii. 11. John iii. 15.

† Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita *perpetuâ solvent formidine* terras. VIRG. Ecl. iv. 13.

wisdom of all the philosophers upon earth, ancient or modern, could ever bestow. But,

II. It is not only in a spiritual sense that our Redeemer *brought peace upon earth;* it is true of him in a temporal meaning also. That benevolence of disposition, and gentleness of behaviour, which he so constantly and so warmly recommended, both by his doctrine and his example, were entirely calculated to promote the peace and harmony of mankind, and to knit them together in one common bond of love and affection. If ever PEACE was made visible in outward form, it was in the person of our blessed Lord. His whole life and conversation were one uniform representation of it, insomuch that it might, even in this sense, be affirmed of him, that "of his PEACE "there was no end." * It would be no difficult nor unpleasing task to trace the influence of this principle from his earliest to his latest breath; and to draw together a very uncommon and surprising assemblage of circumstances, all concurring to establish the uniformity of its operation through the

* Isaiah ix. 7.

whole tenor of his life; but it may suffice for the present to touch upon a few of the most obvious. It has always been remarked, that he came into the world in a time of profound and almost universal peace; and his birth was (as we have seen) first announced, by declarations of peace and goodwill, to shepherds, men, generally speaking, of a most quiet and inoffensive disposition and behaviour. The years of his childhood were passed in a meek and dutiful subjection to his earthly parents; and after he came into public life, he showed the same peaceable submission to all his other lawful superiors. The persons whom he chose to be the companions and the witnesses of his ministry, were of the lowest station, and the humblest tempers. The first miracle he worked, was with a design to promote good humour and good will among men; and all of them tended to improve the peaceful enjoyment of life in some material instance. Yet benevolent as the design of these and all his other actions was, he endeavoured to do them all in such a manner, at such times, and in such places, as to give no offence to any one; to excite no

envy, jealousy, or unjust suspicions. He had at the same time to struggle with the prejudices, the mistakes, and misconstructions of his friends, and the inveterate rancour of his enemies; but yet he never suffered either the one or the other to disturb the composure of his mind, or the peaceableness of his deportment. He bore all the unmerited insults and injuries of his adversaries with more patience than his followers could see them, and was almost the only person that was not provoked at the treatment he met with. The same love of peace attended him to the last.

The sword that was drawn in his defence he ordered to be sheathed *, and healed the wound it had inflicted.† Although "if he "had prayed to his Father, he would have "sent him twelve legions of angels‡," yet he suffered himself to be "led like a lamb "to the slaughter; and as a sheep before "her shearers is dumb, so opened he not "his mouth." §

As he lived, so he also taught, for he "spoke PEACE to his people." ‖ The main

* John xviii. 11. † Luke xxii. 51. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 53.
§ Isaiah liii. 7. ‖ Zech. ix. 10.

purport of his discourses was to banish from the minds of men all those malignant and turbulent passions which fill the world with disorder and misery, and to introduce in their room every thing that tends to turn away wrath, to soften resentment, and to cherish peace; a meek and inoffensive deportment, a patient resignation under injuries and affronts, a compassionate tenderness and fellow-feeling for the miseries of others, and a benevolence as extensive as the whole creation of God. If ever he entered into a house, he saluted it with peace.* If the penitent and contrite sinner fell down and begged mercy at his feet, he bid him go in peace and sin no more.† He was continually exhorting his disciples to "be at "peace one with another, to love their very "enemies, to bless those that cursed them, "to do good to those that hated them, and "to pray for those that despitefully used "and persecuted them."‡

From such a doctrine, supported by such an example, one might naturally hope for the most pacific effects. And in fact those

* Luke x. 5. † Ib. vii. 50.; viii. 48. John viii. 11.
‡ Mark ix. 50. Matt. iv. 44.

effects have followed. For, although Christianity has not always been so well understood, or so honestly practised, as it might have been; although its spirit has been often mistaken, and its precepts misapplied*, yet, under all these disadvantages, it has gradually produced a visible and a blessed change in those points which most materially concern the peace and quiet of the world. Its beneficent spirit has spread itself through all the different relations and modifications of life, and communicated its kindly influence to almost every public and private concern of mankind. It has insensibly worked itself into the inmost frame and constitution of civil states. It has given a tinge to the complexion of their governments, to the temper and administration of their laws. It has restrained the spirit of the prince, and the madness of the people. It has softened the rigour of despotism, and tamed the insolence of conquest. It has, in some degree, taken away the edge of the sword, and thrown even over the horrors of war a veil of mercy. It has descended into families, has dimi-

* See the preceding Discourse.

nished the pressure of private tyranny, improved every domestic endearment, given tenderness to the parent, humanity to the master, respect to superiors, to inferiors ease; and left, in short, the most evident traces of its PEACEFUL GENIUS, in all the various subordinations, dependencies, and connexions of social life. These assertions would very easily admit, and may perhaps hereafter receive, a particular proof. But, for the present, I must content myself with observing in general, that mankind are, upon the whole, even in a temporal view, under infinite obligations to the mild and pacific temper of the Gospel; have reaped from it more substantial worldly benefits than from any other institution upon earth; and found it, by happy experience, to be a religion entirely worthy the gracious Father of the universe, and the Saviour of mankind. As one proof of this (among many others), consider only the shocking carnage made in the human species, by the exposure of infants, the gladiatorial shows, and the exceedingly cruel usage of slaves, allowed and practised by the ancient Pagans. These were not the accidental and temporary ex-

cesses of a sudden fury, but were *legal* and *established*, and *constant* methods of murdering and tormenting mankind, encouraged by the wisest legislators, and affording amusement to the tenderest and most compassionate minds. * Had Christianity done nothing more than brought into disuse (as it confessedly has done) the two

* Besides the many other well-known severities exercised towards the slaves of the ancients, there was a law at Sparta, called the Cryptia, which ordered them to be murdered in cold blood, whenever they increased so fast as to give umbrage to the state. *Plutarch. in Lycurg.* The same author (*De Amore Prolis*) speaks of the exposure of infants as a very common practice. *Seneca* does the same. *De Ira*, l. i. c. 15. It still obtains among the savages in America; and it is said that upwards of 3000 children are annually exposed in the streets of Pekin. Lypsius affirms (*Saturn.* l. i. c. 12.) that the gladiatorial shows sometimes cost Europe twenty or thirty thousand lives in a month; and not only the men, but even the women of all ranks, were passionately fond of these shows. The execrable barbarities here mentioned, continued as they were without intermission through a long course of years, must have destroyed many more lives than all the temporary ravages of religious persecution put together. I cannot conclude this note, without observing how strongly these shocking facts confirm the description given of the ancient Heathens by St. Paul, who represents them as *full of murder, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.* Rom. i. 29. 31. And indeed the whole picture he there draws of Pagan morality and religion will be found, on examination, to be in every the minutest feature of it *exactly and accurately true.* Let the reader peruse that chapter with attention, and let him thank God, from the bottom of his soul, that he is a CHRISTIAN.

former of these inhuman customs entirely, and the latter to a very great degree, it had justly merited the title of the BENEVOLENT RELIGION. But this is far from being all. Throughout the more enlightened parts of Christendom, there prevails a gentleness of manners widely different from the ferocity of the most civilized nations of antiquity; and that liberality with which every species of distress is relieved, both by private donations and public benefactions, even in some of the most bigoted countries of Europe, is a virtue as peculiar to the Christian name as it is eminently conducive to social happiness. As for ourselves, in the nature of our civil constitution, in the extent of our freedom, in the security of our persons and properties, in the temper of our laws, in the administration of justice, in domestic peace and comfort, in offices of mutual kindness and charity, we have a visible and undeniable superiority over the ancients. To what then can this happy change in our circumstances be owing? To philosophy (replies the Deist *), to mild and gentle philosophy, to the humane suggestions

* Voltaire de la Tolerance, ch. iv. pp. 30. 34. 44.

of reason, and the improvement of the liberal arts. Were then reason, philosophy, and good learning, utterly unknown in Greece and Rome? Were not these the very fountains of every thing that was sublime and excellent in human wisdom and polite literature, from whence they were distributed in the purest streams over the rest of the world, and descended to all succeeding ages? Were they not carried in those great schools to a degree of elegance and perfection, at which it is at least doubtful whether the moderns have yet arrived, or ever will? And yet in these very places, at a time when all the arts and sciences were in their full strength and maturity, it was then that those various inhumanities, which are by Christians held in the ntmost abhorrence, were publicly authorized, and an ambitious, contentious, sanguinary disposition universally prevailed. It was then that almost every civil government, was a kind of military establishment, was founded in violence and maintained by it; that wars were begun wantonly, conducted fiercely, and terminated inhumanly; that a passion for martial achievements, a lust of empire,

an insatiable thirst of glory and conquest, filled the world with bloodshed and confusion. It was then that, in the very best institutions, the greatest part of the subjects enjoyed no liberty at all; and what the rest enjoyed, was purchased frequently at the expense of their repose, their humanity, and a great part of those social comforts which render liberty truly valuable. It was then that the courts of judicature (at Rome more especially) were inconceivably corrupt*; that the power both of the father and of the husband was carried beyond all bounds of lenity and utility; that divorces were allowed for the most trivial causes; that the education of children was unreasonably severe and rigorous; that infants were sacrificed to views of policy; that men were trained up to murder each other for the entertainment of the spectators; and that the happiest states were continually rent in pieces by the most violent dissensions, proscriptions, and assassinations, which each party in its turn retorted on its adversaries,

* Opinio omnium sermone percrebuit in his judiciis quæ nunc sunt, *pecuniosum hominem* quamvis sit nocens, *neminem posse damnari*. *Cic. in Verrem.* Orat. 1.

and always with redoubled fury and inhumanity.

If then the utmost perfection of philosophy and the fine arts was not able to tame the fierceness of ancient manners, nay, if they actually grew worse, in this and many other respects, in proportion to their advancement in learning and politeness, to what else but Christianity can it be owing, that scarce any considerable traces of this universal barbarity now remain among us; that in domestic society, the ease and happiness of each individual, even the very lowest, is properly attended to; that weakness of sex, tenderness of age, and humility of condition, instead of provoking insult, generally attract pity and protection; that civil liberty is in our own country more firmly rooted, more equally diffused, more securely enjoyed; that justice is most uprightly and impartially administered; that the meanest of the people are as much under the protection of the laws as the most rich and powerful; that the rage of universal empire is considerably abated, and the frequency, duration, and cruelty of wars greatly diminished; that civil commotions.

more rarely happen, are attended commonly with fewer circumstances of inhumanity and horror, and have oftener proved favourable than fatal to liberty; that the very worst dissensions in this country have been "less distinguished by atrocious deeds, "either of treachery or cruelty, than were "ever any intestine discords of so long "continuance*;" and that the two happiest changes we ever experienced, the *Restoration* and the *Revolution*, were effected with very little interruption of public tranquillity, and were nothing more than *easy transitions*, not (as they would have been under Pagan or Mahometan governments) *horrible convulsions?*† Compare all these amazing

* Hume's Hist. 4to. vol. v. p. 337.

† Some perhaps may be inclined to doubt the truth of one of the positions advanced above, viz. *that the frequency, duration, and cruelty of wars, are less now than in ancient times.* But when we consider the immense armies successively raised and lost by the Asiatic monarchs; the endless contentions for sovereignty between the rival states of Greece; the prodigious numbers slain by Alexander the Great; the sanguinary contests among his succcssors for upwards of 200 years; the continual scenes of bloodshed which Sicily exhibited for many centuries under its various tyrants; the incessant wars of the Romans with the Italian states, the Carthaginians, the Macedonians, Greeks, and various Eastern nations, the Spaniards, Gauls, Britons, and Germans, besides

improvements in social happiness, since the introduction of Christianity, with the precepts and doctrines of that religion; consider their natural tendency to produce what actually has been produced, and then say whether you can hesitate one moment in ascribing these effects to the Gospel, as their sole or at least principal cause. What puts this matter almost beyond a doubt, is, that in those countries where the Christian Revelation is yet unknown, the civil blessings enjoyed by Christianity are equally unknown. The miseries of their ancestors

---

the shocking carnage of their own civil wars, so as to have been only three times in a state of peace, for a short interval, during almost seven centuries; when we reflect further, that it was no uncommon thing, in those ages, to see armies of 300,000 men in the field, of which sometimes the whole, frequently the greater part, and always a large part, fell in battle; and when to all this we add the incredible devastations made by the several barbarous hordes, that at different times burst forth in torrents from the North, and deluged Europe, Asia, and Africa with blood; we shall, perhaps, be inclined to think that Christianity has, upon the whole, already lessened the horrors and desolations of war in some degree, and that, as it comes to be better understood and more generally embraced and practised, its pacific influence will be growing every day more visible and effectual.

have descended to them with their superstitions, and bear a daily living testimony to the benevolence of our religion.* And it is no less remarkable, that the degree of perfection in which these advantages are enjoyed by any nation, is in general pretty nearly proportioned to the degree of purity in which the doctrines of the Gospel are there professed and taught. Thus, for example, (to produce only one instance out of a multitude,) in those kingdoms, where there is no Christianity, there is no liberty. Where the superstitions and corruptions of Popery have almost totally destroyed the simplicity of the Christian Revelation, there too is liberty much obscured and depressed. Where some of those corruptions are thrown off, there some brighter gleams of liberty appear. Where the national religion approaches nearest to the native purity of the Gospel, there, too, civil liberty shines forth

* Let the reader only compare the present state of the Eastern and Western Indians, of Africa and China, of the Turkish and the Persian empires, and of all the late discovered islands, both in the Northern and the Southern hemisphere, with that of the Christian part of Europe, and he will have little reason to doubt the truth of what is here asserted.

in its full lustre, and is carried to a degree of perfection, beyond which human weakness will not, perhaps, suffer it to be advanced.

III. Having dwelt so long on the first part of this discourse, *the beneficial influence of the Gospel on the peace and happiness of mankind*, there is the less time, and indeed the less necessity, to enlarge on the other, that is, *on the evidence which arises from hence of the divine goodness and mercy towards us.* For since it has been shown that Christ did, in almost every sense of the word, *bring peace upon earth* *: that he has made our peace with God, by taking upon him the sins of the whole world; that he has in consequence of this restored to us our peace of mind; that he has introduced peace and gentleness into the sentiments and the manners of men towards each other; and that notwithstanding all the difficulties and disadvantages under which the Gospel has laboured, the many violent passions it has had to struggle with, and the variety of obstacles which have impeded

* See Vitringa on Isaiah ii. 4.

its operations, and counteracted its natural effects, it has nevertheless gradually and silently, yet effectually, advanced the peace and comfort of society; what need can there be of any further proof that the mission of Christ was a most striking instance of God's good will to mankind?

Instead therefore of going about to prove what we all feel to be true, let me rather endeavour to inspire you with what I fear is not always felt as it ought to be, a proper warmth of gratitude and love for such unspeakable goodness. If you ask what return God expects for sending his Son into the world, let the Apostle answer you; "If "God so loved us, we ought also to love "one another."* An extensive, an active benevolence, is the tribute he demands from you; and when he makes *you* happy, the condition is no harder than this, that *you* should make *others* so. Let then your thankfulness be expressed in that best and most forcible of all languages, better, as St. Paul says, than the tongue of men and

* John iv. 11.

in its full lustre, and is c... you to
gree of perfection, bey... ...y towards
weakness will not, per... e can be no
advanced. ...acrifices may

III. Having d... ...us, and praises by
part of this di... ...meaning lips; but he who
of the Gospe... ...ndigent, instructs the ignorant,
mankind, ... *comforts* the afflicted, protects the oppressed,
the le... *conceals* the faults he sees, and forgives the
that ... *injuries* he feels, affords a most convincing
h... *proof* of his sincerity, an incontestable evidence of his gratitude to his heavenly benefactor. And be not afraid, I beseech you, of doing too much, of *overpaying* God's favours. After you have ranged through the whole field of duties which charity lays open to you, the blessings you bestow will fall infinitely short of those you have received. Put then your abilities upon the stretch to do all the good you can unto all men. But in a more especial manner, since it was one of the chief ends of Christ's mission *to bring peace upon earth*, let it be your great ambition to co-operate with him, as far as you are able, in this great design; let it be your constant study and delight to

tread in the steps of your blessed Master, and to contribute every thing in your power towards completing that great and Godlike work of *giving peace to man.* "Let all bit-
"terness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-
"speaking, be put away from among you,
"with all malice; and be ye kind one to
"another, tender-hearted, forgiving one
"another, even as God, for Christ's sake,
"hath forgiven you."*

* Eph. iv. 31, 32.

in its full lustre, and is
gree of perfection, bev
weakness will not, pe
advanced.

III. Having
part of this d
of the Gos
mankind
the l
th

SERMON XIV.

2 Tim. iii, 4.

LOVERS OF PLEASURES MORE THAN LOVERS OF God.

TO what period of time, and to what particular persons, the sacred writer here alluded, it is neither easy nor material to determine. But there *is* a question which it is very material, and I doubt but too easy, for most of us to answer; whether the description in the text may not be justly applied to ourselves? In whatever sense we take the word PLEASURES, whether as denoting those which are in themselves criminal, or those which only become so by excess and abuse, it is surely doing us no injury to say, that we "love them more "than God."

At present I shall confine myself to that sort of pleasures, which are usually styled innocent; and in a certain degree, and under proper restrictions, undoubtedly are so; I mean the gaieties and amusements of life.

If we are not lovers of these pleasures more than lovers of God, if our piety is greater than our dissipation, it must be great indeed. If we served our Maker with half that zeal, half that alacrity and perseverance, with which we pursue our amusements, we should be the most pious nation this day upon earth. But how far this is from being the case, at least with respect to a large proportion of almost every rank of men amongst us, is but too apparent. It is not the LIVING GOD, it is PLEASURE that they worship. To this they are idolaters; to this they sacrifice their time, their talents, their fortunes, their health, and too often their innocence and peace of mind. In their haste to enjoy this life, they forget that there is another; they live (as the Apostle expresses it) "without God in the world*," and their endless engagements not only exclude all love, but all thought of him. However carefully right principles of religion may have been originally planted in their breasts, they have no room to grow up. They are choked with the pleasures of

* Eph. ii. 12.

this world, and bring no fruit to perfection. Invention seems to have been tortured to find out new ways of consuming time, and of being uselessly employed. And there has appeared so wonderful an ingenuity in this respect, that it seems almost impossible for the wit of man to invent, or the life of man to admit, any further additions to this kind of luxury. There are thousands, even of those who would take it very ill to be called vicious, who yet from the time of their rising in the morning to the time of their going to rest at night, never once bestow a single thought upon eternity; nor, while they riot in the blessings of Providence, vouchsafe to cast one devout look up to the gracious Author of them, in whom "they live, and move, and have their "being." *

Many, I know, would persuade themselves and others, that there can be no harm where there is no actual vice; and that, provided they step not over the bounds of virtue, they cannot be guilty of an excess in pleasure.

* Acts xvii. 28.

But is it true, in the first place, that the man of gaiety never *does* step over the bounds of virtue? Are all those things which go under the name of amusements as perfectly innocent as they are generally represented to be? Is there not *one* diversion at least (as it is called) and one so predominant in the higher ranks of life, that it has swallowed up almost every other, which is big with the most fatal mischief? A diversion which, far different from the common run of amusements, has no foundation in our natural appetites; no charms to captivate the fancy, or the understanding; nothing to make glad the heart of man, to give him a cheerful countenance, and refresh him after the cares and fatigues of duty; but runs counter to reason, sense, and nature; defeats all the purposes of amusement; sinks the spirits instead of raising them; sours the temper instead of improving it; and, when it is carried to its utmost lengths, takes such entire and absolute possession of the soul, as to shut out every other concern both for God and man; extinguishes every generous sentiment; ex-

cites the most malignant passions; provokes to the most profane expressions; brings distress, sometimes ruin, upon its wretched votaries, their families, friends, and dependents; tempts them to use unfair, or mean, or oppressive methods of retrieving their affairs; and sometimes to conclude the dismal scene by the last fatal act of desperation. I do not say that gaming *always* produces these effects; or that it is to all persons, in all circumstances, and in all its various degrees, equally pernicious and unlawful. But it has always a *natural tendency* to these effects, it always exposes ourselves and others to great danger, and can never be ranked among our innocent amusements. Yet as such it is every day more and more pursued; nay, has even appropriated to itself the name of *play*; for what reason I know not, unless to *play* with our lives and fortunes, with happiness temporal and eternal, be the most delectable of all human enjoyments.

But putting this strange unaccountable passion out of the question; do not even our most allowable diversions sometimes end in sin, though they may not begin with it?

Does not an immoderate fondness for these trivial things insensibly weaken and corrupt our hearts, and lead us, by imperceptible steps, to a temper of mind, and a course of action, essentially wrong? The fact is, a state of *neutrality* in religion, an insipid mediocrity between vice and virtue, though it is what many would be glad to take up with, is an imaginary state; at least, is very seldom, if ever, to be found in a life of gaiety and dissipation. The man who is constantly engaged in the amusements, can scarce ever escape the pollutions, of the world. In his eager pursuits of pleasure, he will be sometimes apt to overshoot the mark, and to go farther than he ought, perhaps than he intended. Even they who are most in earnest about their future welfare; who have taken care to fortify their minds with the firmest principles of religion; who constantly endeavour to keep alive their hopes and fears of futurity; to guard with the utmost vigilance every avenue of the mind, and secure all "the issues of life*;" even these, I say, are sometimes unable, with all their caution and circumspection, to prevent

* Proverbs iv. 23.

surprise; with all their strength and resolution to withstand the violence of headstrong passions and desires; which often burst through all restraints, and beat down all the barriers that reason and religion had been a long time raising up against them. What then must be the case when all the impressions of religion are, by the continual attrition of diversions, worn out and effaced; when the mind is stript of all prudential caution; no guard left upon the imagination; no check upon the passions; the natural spring and vigour of the soul impaired, and no supernatural aid to strengthen and support it? What else can be expected, but that we should fall an easy prey to the weakest invader, and yield ourselves up to the slightest temptation? "When the unclean spirit cometh, he finds every thing "within prepared for his reception, empty, "swept, and garnished: and he taketh with "him seven other spirits more wicked than "himself; and they enter in and dwell "there, and the last state of that man is "worse than the first*;" he begins in gaiety, and ends in vice.

* Matt. xii. 44, 45.

Let us, however, take this question up on the most favourable grounds: let us allow it possible for you to run round for ever in the circle of gaiety, without ever once striking into the paths of vice. Is this, do you think, sufficient for salvation? If your amusements as effectually choke the good seed as the rankest weeds of vice, can you with any propriety call them innocent? Do you imagine that God, who is a "jealous "God *," will bear to be supplanted in your affections by every trifle; or that he will be content with your not taking up arms against him, though you do him not one single piece of acceptable service? The utmost you can plead is a kind of negative merit, the merit of doing neither good nor harm; and what reception that is likely to meet with, you may judge from the answer given to the unprofitable servant, who produced his talent wrapt up in a napkin, undiminished, indeed, but unimproved: "O thou wicked servant, wherefore gavest "thou not my money into the bank, that "at my coming I might have required

* Exod. xx. 5.

" mine own with usury?"* It is not enough merely to abstain from gross crimes. It is not enough to enjoy yourselves in an indolent harmless tranquillity; to divide matters so nicely as to avoid equally the inconveniences of vice, and the fatigues of virtue; to praise religion in words, to love it perhaps in speculation, but to leave the trouble of practising it to others. This languor and inactivity is a kind of lethargy in the soul, which renders it utterly insensible to the life and spirit of religion. Indifference in any good cause is blamable. In religion, in the Christian religion, it is insupportable. It does violence to the first and fundamental principle of that religion: " Thou shalt love " the Lord thy God with all thy heart, " with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and " with all thy strength." † Go now and let your whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, be engaged in pursuing your amusements, and promoting your pleasures, and then lay claim to the rewards of Christianity.

Happy will it be for you, if you can

* Luke xix. 23. † Mark xii. 30.

escape its punishments. The Gospel, I am sure, gives you no grounds to suppose that you shall. Though you bear no "evil fruit," yet if you bear no "good," you are involved in the sentence of the fig-tree, "Cut it "down, why cumbereth it the ground." * To do nothing is in many cases to do a positive wrong, and as such requires a positive punishment. To stand neuter in dangerous commotions of the state, the great Athenian lawgiver declared to be a crime *against* the state; and in like manner the great Christian lawgiver declares, "he "that is not with me is against me; and "he that gathereth not with me, scattereth "abroad." †

Christianity is throughout an *active* religion; it consists not only in "abstaining "from all appearance of evil ‡;" but "in "being ready to every good work ‖;" and if we stop short at the first, we leave the better half of our business undone. Christ himself "went about" continually "doing "good §;" and he has prescribed a variety

* Luke xiii. 7. † Matt. xii. 30. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 22.
‖ Tit. iii. 1. § Acts x. 38.

of positive and practical duties to his disciples, as the condition of their salvation; and pressed the performance of these duties upon them, with an earnestness and a force of expression, that may well alarm the thoughtless and the gay, and make them reflect on the extreme danger of their situation. With regard to God, we are commanded "to believe in him, to fear him, to love "him, to worship him, to give him thanks "always, to pray without ceasing, and "watch thereunto with all perseverance." With regard to our neighbour, we are "to "do good unto all men, to be rich in good "works, to be kind and tender-hearted, to "feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to "remember them that are in bonds, to "minister to the sick, to visit the fatherless "and widows in their affliction." With regard to ourselves, we are enjoined "to be "temperate in all things, to keep under our "bodies, and bring them into subjection, to "set our affections on things above, to watch "and pray lest we enter into temptation, to "work out our salvation with fear and trem-"bling, to use all diligence to make our

" calling and election sure." Such and so various are the duties pressed upon us in every page of the Scriptures. And is this now a religion to be trifled with? Is it not enough to employ every moment we can spare from the indispensable duties of our station, and the necessary refreshments of nature; and how then can it be consistent with that incessant hurry and dissipation which, intent only on providing a succession of worthless amusements and ignoble gratifications, overlooks every obligation of a man and a Christian; and supposes that the whole business of life is not to employ time usefully, but to consume it insignificantly? Can these men seriously imagine that they are all this time " working out " their salvation," that they are " pressing " forward towards the mark for the prize of " their high calling *," that they are every day drawing nearer and nearer to immortal happiness, and that they shall share the crown of glory with them who " have " borne the burthen and heat of the day?" † Is eternal life so very small an object, so

* Phil. iii. 14. † Matt. xx. 12.

extremely cheap a purchase, as to require not the least pains to obtain it? Or is the situation of the rich man represented in Scripture to be so perfectly safe and secure, that, while the rest of mankind are enduring afflictions, struggling with difficulties, subduing their passions, and "working out "their salvation with fear and trem- "bling;" he, and he only, may neglect all these precautions; may give up his whole time and thoughts to dress, and magnificence, and diversion, and good cheer; may centre his whole care in his own dear person, and make it his sole study to gratify every wish of his heart; may leave his salvation to take care of itself, and, as if he had obtained a promise from Heaven in reversion, think of nothing but present felicity; and say within himself, "Soul, thou "hast much goods laid up for many years, "take thine ease, eat, drink, and be "merry?"* Be not deceived: this is not virtue; this is not religion; this is not Christianity. It is, on the contrary, that very temper of mind, that indolent, soft,

* Luke xii. 19.

luxurious dream of the soul, for which the rich man in the Gospel was condemned "to "lift up his eyes in torments*;" and let those who dread his punishment be warned by his example.

It is then a fatal mistake to suppose, that a life of continual gaiety and dissipation, because it is not marked with any notorious crimes, because it does not shock our consciences with palpable guilt, is therefore perfectly innocent. You have by this time seen, I hope, that it is far from being so. You have seen that it naturally leads to, and frequently terminates in, actual vice; that at the least it so totally unmans and enfeebles the soul, as to render it unfit for the reception of religious truths, incapable of exerting its nobler powers, unable to struggle through the common difficulties, or support the common afflictions of life; and leaves neither time, nor inclination, nor ability, to perform the most important duties of a man, a social being, and a Christian.

The truth is, although diversions may serve very well to quicken a palled appetite, they are much too poignant and high-

* Luke xvi. 23.

seasoned to be the constant food and nourishment of the soul. They not only destroy our relish for the more plain and simple fare of sobriety and virtue, but lay a foundation for the worst diseases; and though they do not so instantly kill as the deadly poison of vice, yet with a gradual and a fatal certainty, they undermine the vital parts, and sap the constitution.

Beware then of an error, which is the more dangerous, because it is not always perceived, or at least acknowledged, to *be* an error. And such of you, more especially, as are just setting out in life, full of those high spirits and gay imaginations which youth, and rank, and affluence naturally inspire; beware of giving way to that feverish thirst of pleasure, to that frivolous turn of mind and levity of conduct, which will render all your great advantages useless, and totally defeat every grand purpose of your creation. Do not imagine that you were born to please yourselves only. Do not entertain that false, that dstructive notion, that your wealth and time are all your own; that you may dispose of them exactly as you think fit

may lavish the whole of them on your own pleasures and amusements, without being accountable to any one for the application of them. There *is* One, most assuredly, who may, and who has declared that he will, call you to an account for the use of that leisure, and those riches, which he bestowed upon you for far other purposes than that mean, ignoble one of mere selfish gratification. There are duties of the last importance owing to your families, your friends, your country, your fellow-creatures, your Creator, your Redeemer, which you are bound under the most sacred ties to perform; and whatever calls off your attention from these, does from that moment cease to be innocent. Here then is the precise point at which you ought to stop. You may be LOVERS OF PLEASURE; it is natural, it is reasonable, for you to be so; but you must not be LOVERS OF PLEASURE MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD.—This is the true line that separates *harmless gaiety* from *criminal dissipation*. It is a line drawn by the hand of God himself, and he will never suffer it to be passed with impunity. HE claims, on the justest

grounds, the first place in your hearts. His laws and precepts are to be the first object of your regard. And be assured, that by suffering them to be so, you will be no losers even in present felicity. It is a truth demonstrable by reason, and confirmed by invariable experience, that a perpetual round of fashionable gaiety is not the road to real substantial happiness. Ask those who have tried it, and they will all (if they are honest) with one voice declare that it is not. It is indeed in the very nature of things impossible that it should be so. This world is not calculated to afford, the human mind is not formed to bear, a constant succession of new and exquisite delights. To aim therefore at uninterrupted, unbounded gaiety, to make pleasure so necessary to your existence, that you cannot subsist one moment without it, is to convert every thing that is not absolute pleasure into absolute pain, and to lay the foundation of certain misery. Diversions are of too thin and unsubstantial a nature to fill the whole capacity of a rational mind, or to satisfy the cravings of a soul formed for immortality. They must, they do, tire and

disgust; you see it every day; you see men flying from one amusement to another; affecting to be happy, yet feeling themselves miserable; fatigued with pursuing their pleasures, yet uneasy without them: growing sick at last of them all, of themselves, and every thing around them; and compelled perhaps at last to have recourse to solitude, without the least provision made for it; without any fund of entertainment within, to render it supportable. From this wretched state it is, that religion would preserve you; and the very worst you have to fear from it, is nothing more than such gentle restraints on your gaiety, as tend to promote the very end you have in view, the true enjoyment even of the present life. Suffer it then to do you this kind office; and do not look on Christianity in that gloomy light, in which it sometimes perhaps appears to you. Far from being an enemy to cheerfulness, it is the truest friend to it. That sober and temperate use of diversions, which it allows and recommends, is the surest way to preserve their power to please and your capacity to enjoy them. At the same time, though it forbids excess

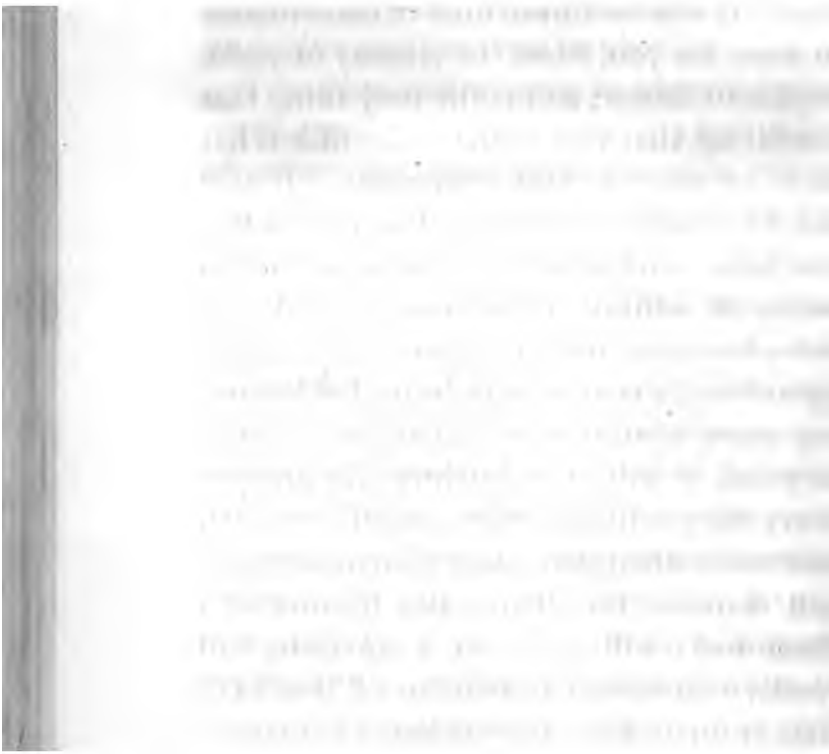
in our pleasures, yet it multiplies the number of them; and disposes the mind to receive entertainment from a variety of objects and pursuits, which to the gay part of mankind are absolutely flat and insipid. To a body in perfect health the plainest food is relishing; and to a soul rightly harmonized by religion, every thing affords delight. Rural retirement, domestic tranquillity, friendly conversation, literary pursuits, philosophical enquiries, works of genius and imagination, nay, even the silent beauties of unadorned nature, a bright day, a still evening, a starry hemisphere, are sources of unadulterated pleasure, to those whose taste is not vitiated by criminal indulgences, or debased by trifling ones. And when from these you rise to the still more rational and manly delights of virtue; to that self-congratulation which springs up in the soul from the consciousness of having used your best endeavours to act up to the precepts of the Gospel; of having done your utmost, with the help of Divine Grace, to correct your infirmities, to subdue your passions, to improve your understandings,

to exalt and purify your affections, to promote the welfare of all within your reach, to love and obey your Maker and your Redeemer; then is human happiness wound up to its utmost pitch; and this world has no higher gratifications to give.

Try, then, you who are in search of pleasures, try these among the rest; try, above all others, the pleasures of devotion. Think not that they are nothing more than the visions of a heated imagination. They are real, they are exquisite. They are what thousands have experienced, what thousands still experience, what you yourselves may experience if you please. Acquire only a *taste* for devotion (as you often do for other things of far less value) in the beginning of life, and it will be your support and comfort through the whole extent of it. It will raise you above all low cares, and little gratifications; it will give dignity and sublimity to your sentiments, inspire you with fortitude in danger, with patience in adversity, with moderation in prosperity, with alacrity in all your undertakings, with watchfulness over your own conduct, with bene-

volence to all mankind. It will be so far from throwing a damp on your other pleasures, that it will give new life and spirit to them, and make all nature look gay around you. It will be a fresh fund of cheerfulness in store for you, when the vivacity of youth begins to droop; and is the only thing that *can* fill up that void in the soul which is left in it by every earthly enjoyment. It will not, like worldly pleasures, desert you when you have most need of consolation, in the hours of solitude, of sickness, of old age; but when once its holy flame is thoroughly lighted up in your breasts, instead of becoming more faint and languid as you advance in years, it will grow brighter and stronger every day; will glow with peculiar warmth and lustre when your dissolution draws near; will disperse the gloom and horrors of a death-bed; will give you a foretaste, and render you worthy to partake of that FULNESS OF JOY, those pure celestial PLEASURES which are at "God's right hand for ever-"more."*

* Psalm xvi. 11.



SERMON XV.

JAMES ii. 10.

WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL.

THERE are few passages of Scripture which have given more occasion of triumph to the enemies of Christianity, and more disquiet to some of its friends, than that now before us. The former represent it as a declaration in the highest degree tyrannical, absurd, and unjust; the latter read it with concern and terror, and are apt to cry out, "It is a hard saying, who can hear "it?"* And a hard saying it undoubtedly is, if it is to be understood, as some have contended, in all its rigour. But it is not

* John vi. 60.

easy to conceive why we are to be bound down to the literal meaning in this particular passage of Scripture, when in several others of the same nature, and to the full as strongly expressed, we depart from it without scruple. No man, I suppose, thinks himself obliged to "give (without distinction or exception) "to every one that "asks him; to pluck out his right eye, or "cut off his right arm; to offer his coat to "him that has taken away his cloak; or "when his enemy smites him on the right "cheek, to turn to him the other also."* Yet all these things, if we regard the mere words only, are commanded in the Gospel. We all hope and believe, that it is possible for a rich man to be saved, and for a great sinner to repent and amend his life. But look into the Scriptures, and they tell you "that it is easier for a camel to go through "the eye of a needle, than for a rich man "to enter into the kingdom of God;" and that if "a leopard can change his spots, and "an Ethiopian his skin, then may they "also do good that are accustomed to do

* Luke vi. 30. Matt. v. 29, 30. 39, 40.

"evil."* These expressions, literally taken, imply *an absolute impossibility.* Yet no interpreter, I believe, ever pretended to infer from them any thing more than *extreme difficulty.* By what rule of criticism then are we obliged to understand the text more strictly than the passages just mentioned? It certainly stands as much in need of a liberal interpretation, and is as justly entitled to it, as these or any other places of holy writ. Consider it only with a little attention. "Whosoever shall keep the whole "law, and yet offend in one point, he is "guilty of all." The meaning cannot possibly be, that he who offends in *one* point only, does by that means actually offend in *all* points; for this is a palpable contradiction. Nor can it mean, that he who offends in one point only, is in the eye of God *equally guilty,* and of course will in a future state be *equally punished,* with him who offends in all points; for this is evidently false and unjust; contrary to every principle of reason and equity, to all our ideas of God's moral attributes, and to the whole tenor of the Gospel, which uniformly

* Matt. xix. 24. Jer. xiii. 23.

teaches a directly opposite doctrine. It is therefore not only allowable, it is absolutely necessary, to understand the proposition in the text with some qualification. The only question is, what this qualification shall be. It is a question certainly of the utmost importance, and well worthy our most serious attention. It is not a matter of nice, and curious, and unprofitable speculation. It is a point in which we are all most deeply interested, and the decision of it must be of great moment to every moral agent, who thinks himself bound by the precepts, or looks forward to the rewards, of the Gospel.

The common interpretation of the text is this. All the laws of the Christian Revelation are founded upon one and the same authority of God. Therefore, every offence against any of those laws is a contempt of the authority upon which they all depend, and consequently every act of disobedience is a breach of the whole law, because subversive of that authority on which the whole law stands.

But to this interpretation it has been observed, that there is one insuperable objection. It is evidently liable to all the

difficulties of the Stoical paradox, that all offences are equal. For if the guilt of sin depends not upon the nature and circumstances of the sinful action, but upon the authority of the lawgiver, then *every* sin being an offence against the same authority, is of the same guilt and heinousness, and consequently will be subject to the same degree of punishment in a future state: which is clearly repugnant to every idea of equity and justice, and (as we shall see hereafter) to the express declarations of Holy Writ. We must therefore look to some other explanation of this confessedly difficult passage, more consonant to reason and to Scripture.

Now the most probable way of arriving at the true sense of it, is, I conceive, to take into consideration the whole of the context, the persons to whom the Apostle's admonition is addressed, the particular object he had in view, and the particular doctrine which that object required him to establish.

The persons to whom this Epistle of St. James was addressed, were, as he himself tells us, *the twelve tribes that were scattered*

abroad *; that is, to those who had been converted from Judaism to Christianity, and who of course still retained several of their old Judaical prejudices.

Some of these Jewish Christians had, it seems, been guilty of making very invidious and grating distinctions between the rich and the poor in their religious assemblies; had treated the former with the most flattering marks of respect, and the latter with harshness and contempt. For this the Apostle, in the verses preceding the text, very severely reproves them, upbraids them with the gross partiality they had shown on this occasion, and tells them, that however trivial this sort of injustice might appear to them, it was in fact a very serious offence, because it was a breach of the great evangelical law of charity, which forbids every kind of insult or injury to our poorer bretheren. † "If," says he, "we

* James i. 1.

† St. Austin confines the Apostle's meaning entirely and exclusively to offences against this great important law of Christian charity, which both St. James and St. Paul say, *is the fulfilling of the law.*

Plenitudo legis est charitas, ac per hoc qui totam legem servaverit si in uno offenderit fit omnium reus, quia contra

fulfil the *royal law* according to the Scripture, (that is, the law which says, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*,) ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors," transgressors of the great royal law of Christian charity or universal love. To this the Jewish convert would have an answer ready, founded on a received maxim of his former religion. For the Jews entertained an idea that the reason why God gave them so many commandments was, that by keeping *any one* of them they might be saved. This therefore they would urge to the Apostle in their own defence, and would say — "Admitting that we have offended against the law of Christ in one instance, yet, as we have observed it in another of great importance, we shall still be entitled to the pardon of our sins, and the rewards of our virtue in a future state." A doctrine so false and pernicious as this, St. James would of course most strenuously oppose, and

charitatem facit *unde tota lex pendet*. August. op. tom. ii. Ep. 29. ad Hieronymum. Bishop Sherlock takes up the same idea, and dilates upon it with great ingenuity.—Disc. v. i. D. 13.

would naturally express his disapprobation of it, in the strongest possible terms that language could supply. No, says he, so far is it from being true, that the observance of one single precept will save you, that the direct contrary doctrine is the true one. "For "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and "yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This is undoubtedly a very strong expression, but the peculiar circumstances of the case called for it; and it must be understood, like many other concise and proverbial maxims of the same sort, with considerable abatements and allowances for the peculiar idioms and phraseology of the times and the countries where it was used, and with a due consideration also of the occasion which drew it forth, and of the specific object which the speaker had in view. Now his object evidently was to convince the Jewish Christian with whom he was arguing, that he had violated, in one material instance, the great royal law of charity; that this was a very heinous offence, and that while he was guilty of this offence, his observance of the law in other respects would avail him nothing. But in order to

convince him of this, he was not obliged to go the length of asserting, that whoever offended in one point was in fact guilty of offending in all points, and would of course be punished hereafter with the same severity as those who had actually offended in all points. This was pushing his argument much farther than was necessary for his purpose. All he had to prove was, that whoever violated the divine law in any one important point, was guilty of a great sin; and if that sin was not done away by sincere repentance and reliance on the merits of Christ, he would assuredly suffer the punishment due to that sin in a future state, notwithstanding his obedience to the law in all other instances. This was the only doctrine which he was called upon and which he meant to establish; and in fact it is the doctrine which he *does* establish in the verse immediately following the text, which clearly explains the meaning of the text itself, and by the illative particle *for*, was evidently *intended* to explain it. For, (says he) He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adul-

tery, yet if thou kill, *thou art become a transgressor of the law.* This is all that he asserts. But if it had been his intention to prove that he who offended in one point, was, strictly speaking, guilty of offending in all points, his conclusion would have been very different; it would have been this: If thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art *become a transgressor of the whole law, in every branch of it.* But he says no such thing. He says only, *Thou art become a transgressor of the law;* and must consequently expect the punishment due to that transgression, notwithstanding thy observance of it in other respects. And as this verse must in all fair construction be considered as a comment on the text, it clearly ascertains the meaning of it to be what is here stated, and nothing more. *

* The truth of the interpretation here given receives great confirmation from some remarks lately communicated to me by a very learned and ingenious friend of mine. He observes, that the concluding clauses of the 9th, 10th, and 11th verses of the 2d Chapter of St. James (which we have been here considering) must necessarily be considered as *equivalent* to each other. These three verses are as follow:

V. 9. If ye have respect of persons ye commit sin, and *are convinced of the law as transgressors.*

From this examination and elucidation of the passage before us, the following conclusions may be drawn:

First, that the *offences* which the Apostle had in view throughout the whole of his reasoning, and of which he speaks in the text, were offences against some important branch of the evangelical law, such as that of Christian charity, for that is the very instance which he himself specifies.*

V. 10. *For*, whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, *he is guilty of all.*

V. 11. *For*, he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, *thou art become a transgressor of the law.*

To every one that considers these three verses attentively, as connected with each other, and particularly the force of the illative particle *for*, in the two last, it will be evident that the 10th is meant to prove the truth of the 9th, and the 11th of the 10th. But the proof entirely fails, and the 10th and 11th verses are left without meaning, unless the clauses in each verse, which are printed in italics, were intended to convey precisely the same idea. If this be admitted, the sense affixed to the text, in this discourse, is fully established.

* Hoc vult Jacobus. Si quis observato reliquo Evangelio præceptum unum in re *magni momenti* negligat (quale est præceptum caritatis quo proximum nocere vetamur) perinde esse ac si alia etiam neglecta assent. *Le Clerc in loc.*

Offendat in uno; nempe eorum quibus pœna capitalis constituta est. GROTIUS.

2d. The offences he alludes to are not casual transgressions arising from ignorance, inadvertence, surprise, or mere human infirmity, but wilful and presumptuous sins *habitually* indulged.* For that violation of Christian charity with which Saint James charges the Jewish converts appears to have been their constant practice.

3d. That although he who offends in one point will not be deemed equally guilty, or be subject to equal punishment with him who offends in all points; yet still the consequences of indulging himself even in *one* favourite sin will be sufficiently dreadful to deter him from such a practice, and to induce him without delay to repent and reform. If he does not, he will in some *material respects* experience the same consequences, and be treated in the same manner, as if he had been actually guilty of offending in all points.

For in the first place he will be excluded from those glorious rewards hereafter, which, through the merits of our Redeemer, are promised to those that to the best of their

* Secker's Sermons, v. vii. s. 3. p. 45.

power pay a uniform obedience to all the laws of Christ. The gates of heaven are shut against every habitual and unexpiated sin. He who lives and dies in the constant commission of any one presumptuous sin, shall have no more title to a future recompense than if he had been guilty of every sin; and in this sense, by offending in one point, he may not improperly be said to be guilty of all; for the consequence to him with regard to future happiness, will be the same as if he actually had been so.

In the next place, he who is wilfully and habitually guilty of any one presumptuous sin will be as certainly doomed to *some* degree of future punishment, as if he had transgressed every divine command instead of one. The Scriptures denounce *tribulation and anguish against every soul of man that doeth evil.* * This indeed seems the natural consequence of being excluded from reward. For in our Lord's representation of the last judgment, there are but two classes into which all mankind are divided, the wicked and the good, those who are

* Rom. ii. 9.

punished and those who are rewarded. Between these there does not appear to be any middle rank, any neutral set of beings, who are neither punished nor rewarded. The sheep are placed on the right hand, and the goats on the left, but we hear of none who have a station assigned them between both. They who do not "go away into life eternal," are ordered to depart into a state of everlasting punishment. And since the offender in one point cannot be among the first, he must necessarily be among the last. In this, then, as well as in the loss of heaven, he shares the fate of him who is guilty of all.

Thus far, then, the partial and the universal sinner agree. They are both excluded from happiness; they are both sentenced to future punishment. But here the resemblance between them ceases, and the parallel must be pushed no farther. Here begins the parting point, the line of separation, between the two cases. Here that limitation of the text takes place, which common justice and common sense require. Though the offender in one point, and the offender in all, are both doomed

to punishment, yet it is by no means to *equal* punishment. It may be, and probably is, the same in *kind*, but it cannot possibly be the same in *degree*. We have every assurance which reason and Scripture can give, that the future sufferings of sinners will be exactly suited to their respective crimes. The Judge of all the earth will assuredly do right, and all the world shall see and acknowledge the perfect impartiality of his proceedings. Proportionable rewards and punishments are everywhere announced in the Gospel in the clearest and most explicit terms. We are told, that "some "shall be beaten with many stripes, and "some with few*;" and that "it shall be "more tolerable for certain persons in the "day of judgment than for others †," who shall receive "a greater condemnation." Whoever therefore thinks himself authorized by the text to go on from sin to sin, and to accumulate one crime upon another, from a presumption that he shall not suffer more for offending in all points than for offending only in one; and that, after the first deviation from virtue, every subsequent vice may

* Luke xii. 4. 48. † Matt. x. 15.

be practised with impunity, will find himself most fatally deceived. As sure as God is just, and the Gospel is true, so surely will the judgments of the last day be inflicted on all impenitent offenders, not promiscuously and indiscriminately, but in weight and measure precisely balancing their several demerits. And although from the text we may collect, that any one vice, habitually indulged, will as effectually exclude us from reward, and subject us to punishment, as if we had been guilty of *every* vice; yet the *degrees* of that punishment will be exactly proportioned to the number and the magnitude of the sins we have committed.

That the sense here given to St. James's words is the true one, must, I think, be allowed by every one that will take the trouble of casting his eye on the chapter from whence the text is taken, and that which immediately precedes it. He will see that the Apostle's reasoning, throughout a great part of these chapters, is directed against that most dangerous notion, which the heart of man has been at all times but too apt to entertain, and which the Jews,

more especially, carried to a most extravagant height, *that universal holiness of life is not necessary to salvation*; that a *partial* obedience to the divine law is sufficient to secure both impunity and reward; and, *that many virtues will cover and excuse one favourite vice.* This was the error which the Apostle undertook to combat; and in order to do this, it was not (as I have already observed) necessary for him to prove, that he who offends in one point is, literally and strictly speaking, guilty of all. This was going not only beyond all bounds of credibility and truth, but beyond every thing that his argument required. All that this naturally led him to prove was, *that no impenitent offender, even though he offended in one point only, should either obtain reward or escape punishment.* Accordingly, it is this doctrine which he endeavours throughout the whole context to establish. It is this which he lays down with peculiar emphasis in the text; it is this which he inculcates a few verses before, in words nearly as forcible as those in the text, and which will assist us in confirming the interpretation here given of it. The words I mean are these:

"If any man among you," says he, "seem "to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, "but deceiveth his own heart, *that man's* "*religion is vain.*"* Here, you see, is a specification of one particular point (that of *habitual evil speaking*, in all the worst senses of that word) in which he supposes that a man, in other respects religious and unblamable, offends.† And what does he say of that man? Why, that *his religion is vain*, is unprofitable, is useless to him, will in the last day avail him nothing, will neither entitle him to reward, nor exempt him from punishment. When, therefore, within a few verses after this, he resumes the argument, and says, "Whosoever shall "keep the whole law, and yet offend in "one point, he is guilty of all," who can have any doubt that he means nothing more than to express, in stronger and more comprehensive terms, the very same doctrine which he had just before laid down with regard to one particular case? The clearness of the former passage reflects light on the obscurity of the latter; and when St. James says, "Whosoever shall keep the

* James i. 26. † See Benson in loc.

" whole law, and yet offend in one point, " *he is guilty of all,*" it is exactly the same as if he had said, " Whosoever shall keep " the whole law, and yet offend in one " point, *that man's religion is vain:*" will be of no benefit to him in the great day of retribution. He will be as far from obtaining either impunity or reward, as if he had been guilty of every sin, instead of one.*

The justness of this explanation will, I apprehend, appear in a still stronger light, if we try it (as all explanations of Scripture ought to be tried) by considering in one view the whole passage from whence the text is taken, and then subjoining such a

* There is a very ingenious conjecture of Baulacre's, in Wetstein, on the text in question, James ii. 10. Instead of the common reading, γεγονε παντων ενοχος, he proposes (with a very small variation) γεγονε παντως ενοχος: that is, he is *undoubtedly* guilty, he is *clearly* a transgressor of the law. Just as it is said, Acts xxviii. 4., Παντως φονευς εστιν ο ανθρωπος ουτος, " *No doubt* this man is a murderer." — Could this emendation be established, it would certainly remove all difficulty. But it is not supported by any manuscript. And I doubt much whether the word ενοχος is ever used by any good writer, *singly* and *absolutely* to signify *guilty*. It is generally found in construction with some noun to which it has a reference, and by which its sense is determined. Thus it is said, Matt. v. 21., ενοχος τη κρισει; and, xxvi. 66., ενοχος θανατου; and in Demosthenes, and other classical writers, ενοχος τοις νομοις, &c. &c.

paraphrase of it as the meaning here affixed to St. James's words requires. The entire context is as follows:

"If ye fulfil the royal law, according to "the Scripture, THOU SHALT LOVE THY "NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF, ye do well: but "if ye have respect to persons, ye commit "sin, and are convinced of the law as "transgressors. For WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP "THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE "POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL. For he that "said, Do not commit adultery, said also, "Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no "adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become "a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, "and so do, as they that shall be judged by "the law of liberty. For he shall have "judgment without mercy, that hath showed "no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against "judgment."

If the principles advanced in this discourse be true, and the conclusions just, the sense of this very obscure passage will be what is here subjoined.

If you fulfil the great law of LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELVES (which, having been adopted, explained, and enforced by

our SPIRITUAL SOVEREIGN, CHRIST, and made one of the two great branches of his religion, may be justly called the ROYAL LAW); if, I say, you fulfil this law in all its various parts, you do well. But if you show such an uncharitable respect of persons as I have specified above, you thereby violate that royal law, you commit a great sin, and must expect the punishment due to that sin. There is indeed, I know, a doctrine prevalent among you, which some of you may be apt to think will secure you from this punishment. You have been told by your Jewish instructors, not only that a life of virtue in general will atone for the habitual practice of any single vice, but, that, if you observed punctually *one great precept of the law*, and violated all the rest, it should be well with you, and your days should be prolonged, and you should possess the earth.* You may therefore possibly flatter yourselves, that although you do perpetually transgress the great law of charity by an undue respect of persons, yet, on account

* See Pocock on Hosea xiv. 2., p. 683.; and Whitby on James ii. 11.

of your obedience to the moral law in other instances, you will not only escape punishment, but obtain reward. But this is a most dangerous and delusive notion. It is one of those old judaical prejudices that still retain their hold upon your minds, where they have been early and deeply impressed by the corrupt traditions and false glosses of your rabbinical interpreters of the law. But be not deceived. It is so far from being true, as you have been taught to think, that *he who observes one great precept of the law, observes the whole*, that the very reverse of this is the truth. For I say unto you, that WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL; *so far*, I mean, *guilty of all*, that he shall be no more entitled either to impunity or to reward, than if he had transgressed in every point instead of one. For you know very well, that "HE WHO SAID, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, SAID ALSO, DO NOT KILL." Every precept of the law proceeds from the same Divine Lawgiver. If, therefore, "you commit no adultery, yet if

"you kill," if you observe one command and break another, you rebel against that Divine Lawgiver, you plainly become a transgressor of his law in *one* instance, and must consequently suffer the punishment annexed *to that transgression*, notwithstanding the punctuality of your obedience in all other instances. This perhaps you will think a hard saying, and may have entertained hopes that you should experience more indulgent treatment under the law of the Gospel, which you have so often heard emphatically styled THE LAW OF LIBERTY. And such, in many important senses, it certainly is. It has delivered you from the heavy yoke of ceremonial observances; it has set you free from the "curse of the law, "from the ministration of death, from the "letter that killeth," and has called you into "the glorious liberty of the children "of God."* "So SPEAK YE, then, AND SO "DO, AS THEY THAT SHALL undoubtedly "BE JUDGED BY THE LAW OF LIBERTY." But mistake not the nature of this LIBERTY.

* Gal. iii. 13. 2 Cor. iii. 7. Rom. viii. 21.

Do not fancy it to be a liberty of transgressing any precept which you find it difficult to observe. Though the Gospel has emancipated you from the slavery of the *ritual law*, yet it has not in the smallest degree released you from the obligations of the *moral law*. On the contrary, it confirms and establishes that law. Were it to allow, or even connive at, the indulgence of any one favourite passion, it would be a law, not of *liberty, but of licentiousness*. It will not, therefore, it cannot, suffer the breach even of one single divine command to pass unpunished. He, consequently, "SHALL "HAVE JUDGMENT WITHOUT MERCY, THAT "HATH SHEWED NO MERCY:" he that transgresses the great law of *mercy*, or Christian charity, shall not, on account of his obedience in other respects, be exempted by the *mercy* of God from the punishment due to that offence. But if, on the contrary, he uses his best endeavours to fulfil every precept in the Gospel, and especially that most important one of *mercy* or *universal love*, then shall "MERCY REJOICE AGAINST JUDGMENT:" his casual transgres-

sions and infirmities shall meet with *mercy* at the hand of his Almighty Judge; and the same compassion shall at the last day be graciously extended to him, which he himself has shown to his offending or his distressed fellow-creatures.

SERMON XVI.

JAMES ii. 10.

WHOSOEVER SHALL KEEP THE WHOLE LAW, AND YET OFFEND IN ONE POINT, HE IS GUILTY OF ALL.

IT has, I hope, been sufficiently proved, that the interpretation given of these words, in the preceding Discourse, is not arbitrary and conjectural; but grows out of the context and the occasion, and is conformable to the whole tenor of St. James's argument, and the particular object he had in view. It makes no greater abatement in the apostle's expression than the peculiar ardour and energy of the Scripture-language, and the concise sententiousness of proverbial maxims, absolutely require; no greater than is authorized by the soundest rules of criticism, and the practice of the soberest expositors in many similar instances. At the same time, it seems to stand clear of all the objections which have been usually

urged against the text. It leaves no room to charge it with extravagant and undistinguishing severity, and the doctrine it presents to us is confirmed by the whole tenour of Holy Writ.

Every one in the least conversant with Scripture must know, that the rewards of Christianity are there promised to those only who, to the best of their power, endeavour "to stand perfect and complete in all the "will of God*;" and that its punishments are denounced against every habitual sin of every kind, without any exception made in favour of those who offend in one point only, and observe all the rest.† And as this is the universal language of Scripture, so is it perfectly conformable to every principle of reason, justice, and equity.

In regard to a future recompense, the case will not admit a doubt. Eternal life being the free and voluntary gift of God, he may certainly give it on whatever terms he thinks fit to prescribe. The terms he *has* prescribed are, *faith in Christ*, and *obedience to all his laws*. Whoever therefore does not comply with the terms required,

* Col. iv. 12. † Rom. ii. 9.

can have no claim to the favour granted on those terms, and those only. Although the offender in one point may possibly go so far as to flatter himself that he shall not be *punished* for his offence, yet he can never surely expect to be *rewarded* for it. It would indeed be strange, if all who had only one favourite vice should be admitted to a state of felicity hereafter. For, since different men are, by their different inclinations, led to transgress in different ways, it must by this means come to pass, that sinners of every denomination would find their way to heaven. And thus, instead of meeting there, as we are taught to expect, with "the spirits of just "men made perfect*," and an illustrious assembly of saints and angels, we should find ourselves surrounded, in the very mansions of bliss, with such sort of company as we should be ashamed to be seen in upon earth.

Nothing therefore can be more undeniably reasonable and just, than that the habitual transgressor of any one divine command should be excluded from future happiness. Yet still perhaps it may be thought hard,

* Heb. xii. 23.

that he should be doomed to future misery. There is scarce any thing we are apt to think so reasonable, and so natural, as that a number of good qualities should atone for one bad habit, and shelter us from punishment, at least, if not entitle us to reward. Yet why should we expect this from the Gospel-dispensation, when in the ordinary course of God's providence we find it quite otherwise? How often do we see, in the affairs of this world, not only that *one habitual vice*, but that *one single wrong action*, will, in spite of a thousand excellences, draw after it the ruin of fortune, fame, and every earthly comfort? The case is the same in the economy of nature, and the artificial institutions of civil society. The health of the human body is the result of perfect order in every part. If the slightest member be indisposed, it disturbs the ease of the whole, and "every member suffers "with it." In the body-politic a complete obedience to the laws is the only title to the protection of the state; and a single crime, notwithstanding all our other services, will render us obnoxious to its punishments. Add to this, that in all compacts and cove-

nants which we enter into with one another, concerning our worldly affairs, the breach of any one essential condition vacates the covenant, and deprives us of all the benefits we claim under it. Now, the title we have to everlasting happiness hereafter is founded solely, not on the precarious ground of our own imperfect services; for "we are all unprofitable servants*;" but on the sure basis of that efficacious covenant, which was made between God and us through the mediation of our Redeemer, and which he sealed with his own blood upon the cross. All the precepts of the Gospel are so many conditions of this covenant, which we have promised, and which we are bound to observe. If therefore we wilfully and habitually violate any one of these conditions, though we religiously observe all the rest, we evacuate the covenant, we forfeit our *federal right* (the only right we have) to the pardon of our sins, and consequently lay ourselves open again to the punishment that is naturally due to them. Where then can be the ground for complaining of severity in this respect? What pretence can we have

* Luke xvii. 10.

for murmuring at our Judge, if he observes the same measures of justice in the next world, which the general course of his providence in this gives us reason to expect; if he treats us, in a future state, with no greater rigour than we ourselves, in our most important concerns, think it equitable and prudent to exercise towards each other?

But will not God then judge us in mercy? Will he have no compassion on human infirmity? Will he be extreme to mark and to punish every thing that is done amiss, notwithstanding the punctuality of our obedience in all other respects?

That God will judge us in mercy there can be no doubt; what, alas! would become of the very best of us, if he did not? But that he will suffer his mercy to annihilate his justice, by allowing any one of his laws to be insulted with impunity, is what no reasonable man can possibly suppose. We need not be much afraid of leaving no room for the exercise of mercy. After we have done all we can, after we have kept the whole law, without exception, with all the care and punctuality we are able; there will be still enough left for God to pardon, and the

most perfect of us will have abundant occasion for the utmost display of his clemency towards us. In our observance of *every* law, there will be innumerable defeats and errors, which are the proper objects of divine compassion. These he has promised to forgive, on our sincere repentance, for the sake and through the merits of Christ Jesus; and on the same grounds we have good reason to hope that great allowance will be made for such failings and infirmities as we watch, and strive, and pray against, and persevere in opposing. But we must not expect the same mercy to be extended to any wilful and presumptuous transgression, if habitually persisted in, without repentance and reformation. And even with regard to our best virtues, if they can, with all their own blemishes, obtain acceptance through the intercession of our Redeemer, they do full as much as we have any reason to expect from them. They have no superabundant merit of their own; and can therefore have none to spare for other purposes, to serve as a covering for some favourite sin.

The result then of the whole is, that the only sure ground of admission to heaven, and of security against future punishment, is reliance on the merits of our Redeemer, and an unreserved (though too often, God knows, imperfect) obedience to *every* precept in the Gospel. There is indeed always *one* which we find it more difficult to observe than the rest, and which for that reason we are very desirous not to observe at all. But if we are in earnest about our everlasting welfare, our obedience in *this* point also, however painful, is indispensably necessary. It is that cross which we are ordered to take up when we are commanded to follow Christ. It is the yoke he imposes upon us, the burthen he requires us to bear. To decline this, is at once to reject the terms of our salvation, and to forfeit all pretensions to divine favour. It is to no purpose to urge the exactness of our obedience in *other* instances. Our good deeds can be no otherwise acceptable in the sight of God, than as they flow from a principle of love to him, and obedience to his laws, as revealed to us in the Gospel of his blessed Son. But if

we constantly transgress these laws in any one important point, it is impossible that our observance of the rest should proceed from any religious motive. If such a motive influenced us in *some* points, it would influence us in *every* point, and would never allow us, in any instance, to persist in a direct opposition to the commands of the God we loved. The love of ourselves, the love of power, of praise, of pleasure, of gain, may in many cases lead us to virtue; and it will be evident that we followed no worthier guides, if, when they lead us to vice, we follow them without reluctance, and are as ready to *break* any of God's laws at their suggestion as to *observe* them.

Let us bring this matter home to our own bosoms, let us judge from our own sentiments and feelings on similar occasions. Should we think that man a sincere friend to us, who, where it coincided with his natural propensities, where it flattered his vanity or indulged his pride, where it served his ambition or promoted his interest, would very readily show us any mark of kindness and regard; but, where it thwarted any of these views, would most shamefully desert us, al-

though in the utmost need of his assistance? Or, should we think that servant worthy of his hire, and of our favour, who although in other points he behaved well, yet in one material part of his business, where his service was most necessary, and most acceptable to us, acted in direct opposition to our express orders? Should we not call the one a deceitful friend, and the other a worthless servant, and renounce them both with the contempt and indignation they deserved? And how then can we imagine that God will accept such a service at our hands as the meanest man amongst us would think an insult upon him? How can we suppose that he will be content with the leavings of our passions; will be satisfied with our observance of those laws which we have not perhaps the least inclination or temptation to transgress; and overlook our disobedience in that *only point* where we *can* show the sincerity of our attachment to him; where our passions and our interests interfere with our duty, and strongly prompt us to rebel against our Maker?

"Let then every one that names the name "of Christ depart from iniquity *" of every

* 2 Tim. ii. 14.

kind. Let him "eschew his own peculiar "wickedness." Let him take a resolution of immediately repenting of and relinquishing that favourite sin which does most easily beset him; and if his repentance is sincere, and his reformation effectual, his past offences will for the sake, and through the merits, of Christ, (who came into the world for the very purpose of saving sinners,) be forgiven and blotted out; and he will be restored to the favour of God, and received into the arms of his mercy. But if, on the contrary, he wilfully and obstinately persists through life in any one presumptuous and habitual sin, he will be as effectually excluded from reward, and subjected to *some* degree of punishment, as if he had offended in all points instead of one.

This is the true, the genuine doctrine of Holy Writ. The doctrine of the world, I know, is of a very different complexion; and we have been favoured with systems of morality, and plans of education, of a much more compliant, and commodious, and indulgent temper.* The substance of them is com-

* The well-known Letters of a deceased nobleman to his son, were published a few months before this sermon was preached at St. James's.

prised in a few words; "adulation to those "we despise, courtesy to those we hate, con- "nections without friendship, professions "without meaning, good-humour without "benevolence, good manners without mo- "rals, appearances saved, and realities sacri- "ficed." These are the maxims which are now to enlighten and improve mankind; and, as they come recommended with every advantage that wit, and ease, and elegance of composition, can give them, there is but too much reason to apprehend that a large part of the rising generation will receive these oracles with implicit faith, and consider their authority as sovereign and supreme in some of the most essential articles of moral conduct. The times did not seem to call for any new encouragements to licentiousness. But what else can be expected, when (as the prophet complains) "men forsake the foun- "tain of living waters, and hew them out "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no "water*;" when deserting the plain road of moral rectitude which Revelation sets before them, they strike out into devious and crooked paths, and form a fanciful system

* Jer. ii. 13.

of their own, in which every thing is modelled exactly to their mind; in which vices are transformed into virtues, and virtues into vices, just as it happens to suit their particular taste and convenience? Can there possibly be a more convincing proof of the utter inability of human wisdom, even in its most improved and exalted state, to undertake the direction of our moral behaviour, and the absolute necessity of light from above to guide our steps aright, even in what we are pleased to call this *enlightened age?* Can any thing more clearly show the infinite obligations we are under to Christianity, for taking this important business out of the hands of man, and placing it in the hands of God; for marking out to us one straight, undeviating line of conduct, and forbidding us, under the severest penalties, to turn aside from it "to the right hand or to the left?" Who does not now see the wisdom, the reasonableness, the utility of the doctrine in the text, that "whosoever shall keep the "whole law, and yet offend in one point, he "is guilty of all?" Who does not see, that to recede one tittle from *the true meaning* of this declaration, is to open a door for the

admission of every imaginable iniquity? When once we begin to question the necessity of *universal holiness;* when once we begin to make laws for ourselves, and to determine peremptorily that *this* virtue is illiberal, and *that* impracticable, *this* vice a pardonable frailty, and *that* a necessary accomplishment, it is easy to perceive, that there must soon be an end of all distinction between right and wrong. If one man, for instance, thinks that adultery and hypocrisy are in certain circumstances, and on certain occasions, allowable, why may not another claim the like indulgence for anger, pride, ambition, or revenge, and rank *them* also in the number of genteel and reputable vices? There is, in fact, hardly a crime in nature which has not somewhere or other a patron and defender. And thus, if every man, instead of eschewing his own peculiar wickedness, is to have an exemption granted him from every restraint which he happens to think inconvenient, the duties of religion will be all picked out of the Gospel one by one, till there is not a single virtue left, which may not be evaded whenever we think fit.

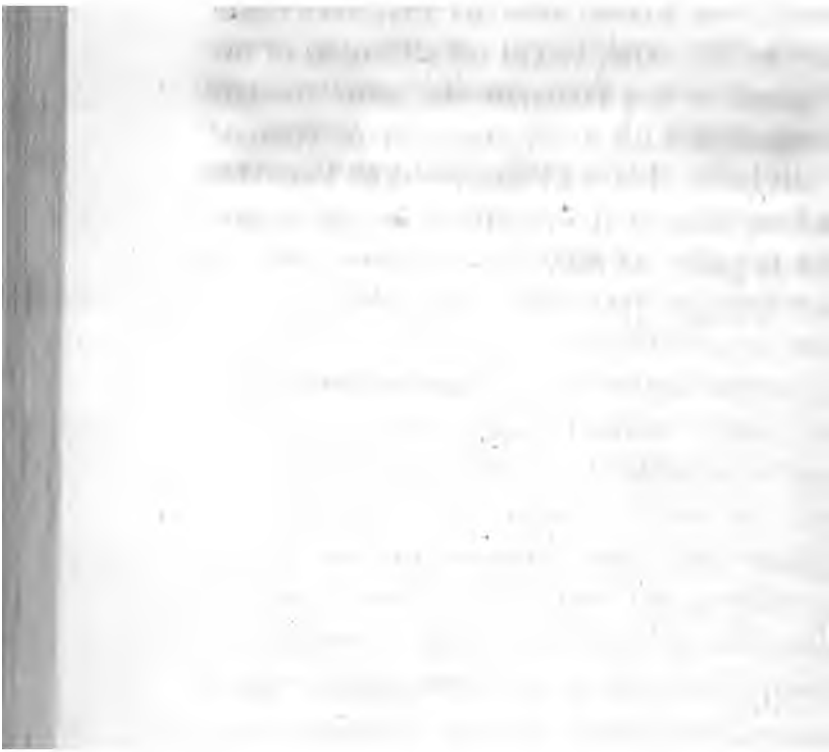
This instance, then, among a thousand others, may serve to convince us, how dangerous it would be to allow the smallest latitude in the terms and measures of obedience; and how necessary it is for those, who are the appointed guardians of EVANGELICAL TRUTH, to watch over it with unremitted vigilance; and on no account to lower the sublime tone of Gospel-morality, in order to make it speak a softer language, and accommodate it to the fanciful conceits and corrupt casuistry of worldly wisdom. Men may undoubtedly *act* by whatever rule they please; but the rule by which they will be *judged* is that of the Gospel; and all that *we* can do is to lay it plainly and fairly before them, and warn them loudly of the danger of following any other guide. They *may* fancy, if they will, that improved and elevated minds are above *vulgar restraints*; that what is vice in a low station, by ascending into a superior region, leaves its dregs behind, and is sublimated into virtue; that dissimulation, though a base coin, is a necessary one*; and that the grossest

* A *heathen* moralist was, however, it seems, of a different opinion. Ex omni vita simulatio & dissimulatio tollenda est.—Cic. de Off. l. iii. c. 15.

irregularities, when they help to embellish our manners, are not vices of the heart, but little infirmities of youth, which are sure to meet with indulgence here, and impunity hereafter. If men of ingenuity *choose* to amuse themselves with such imaginations as these; and if others think it prudent to take *them* for their guide rather than *God*, they must do it at their own peril. But they who pretend to any principle, or any religion, will do well to remember, that *He* who has the sole right of regulating our conduct, and who alone can inform us on what terms he will receive or reject us for ever, *He* has prescribed to us a very different course of behaviour. He requires from us, not merely the *appearance*, but the *reality*; not the "form only, but the power of "godliness." He holds out the same rule of life to high and low, to rich and poor: "He regardeth not the persons of men;" and, if he has given any one human being "a license to sin," let that license be produced. He commands us not to *conform* to a corrupt world, not to *flatter* and *dissemble*, in order to please and deceive

all mankind, but "IN SIMPLICITY AND "GODLY SINCERITY, to have our con- "versation in the world." * What *some* call pardonable infirmities, *He* calls vices of the heart; and plainly tells us that *they defile the man.* † And, to cut off all hopes of indulgence to any favourite sin, even though surrounded with a constellation of virtues, he declares, that "whosoever shall keep the "whole law, and yet offend in one point, "he is guilty of all."

* 2 Cor. i. 12. † Matt. xv. 18.



SERMON XVII.

LUKE IV. 17, 18, 19, 20.

AND THERE WAS DELIVERED UNTO HIM THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET ESAIAS. AND WHEN HE HAD OPENED THE BOOK, HE FOUND THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS WRITTEN,

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE HATH ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR; HE HATH SENT ME TO HEAL THE BROKEN-HEARTED, TO PREACH DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET AT LIBERTY THEM THAT ARE BRUISED,

TO PREACH THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.

AND HE CLOSED THE BOOK, AND HE GAVE IT AGAIN TO THE MINISTER, AND SAT DOWN. AND THE EYES OF ALL THEM THAT WERE IN THE SYNAGOGUE WERE FASTENED ON HIM.

IN this manner did our gracious Redeemer open his divine commission; with a dignity and a tenderness, both of language and

of sentiment, which we shall in vain look for in any other public teacher of religion. We may easily conceive, that after he had uttered this noble prophecy, "the eyes of all "them that were in the synagogue" would be "fastened on him." They all immediately "bare him witness, and wondered at "the gracious words that proceeded out of "his mouth." * This admiration indeed of theirs soon gave way to far other emotions, and in consequence of the just reproof they received from him, for their perverse and senseless prepossessions against him, "they "were filled with wrath, and thrust him out "of their city." † But we, who have no such prejudices and passions as theirs to mislead our judgments and overpower our natural feelings, must necessarily be filled with love and reverence towards him, when we read that sublime and affecting declaration of his intentions, which is conveyed in the words of the text. We cannot but perceive that "the Spirit of the Lord was "indeed upon him," and that he was in truth the person to whom the passage

* Luke iv. 20. 22. † Luke iv. 28, 29.

in Isaiah, which he recited, evidently referred. We know that our Lord most completely verified the words of the prophet, both in their literal and their spiritual meaning. He preached the Gospel to the poor in fortune, the poor in spirit, and the poor in religious knowledge. He healed the broken-hearted; he raised and comforted those that were oppressed with calamity, with disease, and with sin. To him that was bowed down with infirmity, either of body or of soul, his language was, "Son, be of "good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee; "go in peace, and sin no more." "He "strengthened the weak hands, and con- "firmed the feeble knees; he said to them "that were of a fearful heart, Be strong, "fear not, behold your God will come. He "will come and save you." * "He gave "sight also to the blind;" he removed the film from the mental as well as from the corporeal eye; and to those that "sat in "darkness, and in the shadow of death," he disclosed at once the cheerful light of day, and the still more glorious light of divine truth. "To the captives," to them that

* Isaiah xxxv. 3, 4.

were "bruised, he preached deliverance." He preached a doctrine which not only released from spiritual bondage those that had been enthralled and led captive by their sins, but so softened and subdued the most ferocious minds, and diffused throughout the earth such a spirit of mildness, gentleness, mercy, and humanity, that the heavy chains of personal slavery were gradually broken in most parts of the Christian world; and they that had been for so many ages *bruised* by the cruel and oppressive hand of pagan masters, were at length set free.

Thus did our blessed Lord accomplish what the prophet foretold, and what he, by the inspiration of that "Spirit which was "upon him," so explicitly applied to himself. It is therefore evidently incumbent on those who are the appointed teachers of his religion, and more especially on that VENERABLE SOCIETY, whose professed design and province is THE PROPAGATION OF HIS GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS, to tread as nearly as they can in the steps of their heavenly Master, and carry on, to the best of their abilities, that gracious and benevolent work which he begun. It was plainly

one great purpose of his life to relieve misery of every kind, and under every shape; and his chief attention was, agreeably to his declaration in the text, bestowed on the most indigent, the most ignorant, the most helpless, and the most wretched of the human species. Too many there are, God knows, in every quarter of the unenlightened world, who stand in need of our compassionate assistance toward the relief of their wants, both temporal and spiritual; and it is a most melancholy consideration, that so large a part of the habitable globe continues still unacquainted with the blessings of true religion. But there is *one class* of our fellow-creatures which has such distinguished pre-eminence in misery of almost every kind, and which so exactly corresponds to all that variety of wretchedness enumerated in the text, that one would almost be tempted to think our Saviour actually alluded to them, and had their case among the other great events of futurity, in his eye. For when he speaks of the "poor, the broken-hearted, "the blind, the captive, the bruised," who can forbear thinking on that unhappy race of beings, the AFRICAN SLAVES in our

West Indian colonies? If there are any human creatures in the world who concentrate in themselves every species of evil here enumerated, who are at once poor and broken-hearted, and blind, and captive, and bruised, our Negro-slaves are beyond all comparison those creatures. Even in a literal sense, this description is in several circumstances a just picture of their situation; but, in a figurative and spiritual meaning, it may, with the strictest truth, be applied to them. They are in general considered as mere machines and instruments to work with, as having neither understandings to be cultivated nor souls to be saved. To the greater part, not so much as the mere ceremony of baptism is administered; and scarce any enjoy sufficient leisure or assistance for a proper degree of instruction in the doctrines and the duties of religion. Sunday is indeed a day which they are generally indulged with for their own use; but they spend it commonly, not in attending public worship, or receiving private instruction, but in visiting and trafficking with each other, or in cultivating their own little allotments of land, for which,

except in one island, that of Jamaica, they have seldom any other time allowed them.* Thus it comes to pass, that in the British islands alone there are upwards of four hundred thousand human beings †, of whom much the greater part live most literally without God in the world; without any knowledge of a Creator or Redeemer; without any one principle either of natural or revealed religion; without the idea of one moral duty, except that of performing their daily task, and escaping the scourge that constantly hangs over them. The consequence is, that they are heathens, not only in their hearts, but in their lives; and, knowing no distinction between vice and virtue, they give themselves up freely to the grossest immoralities, without so

* There is even a *market* held in the island on Sundays, to which the slaves resort; a profanation of the Lord's day as needless as it is irreverent. See Long's *Hist. of Jamaica*, vol. ii. p. 491, 492.

† The number of slaves in the several West India islands now in our possession, or restored to us by the treaty of the present year, 1783, were, a short time before the war, said to be about 410,000. The Negroes in the French islands were, in 1777, computed at 386,500. The Abbé Raynal states the whole number of African slaves in America and the West India islands at 1,400,000. *Hist. Phil.* vol. iv. p. 15.

much as being conscious that they are doing wrong. *

A condition such as this, in which so many thousands of our unoffending fellow-creatures are involved, cannot but excite the compassion of every feeling heart; and it must be matter of no small surprise, and of the deepest concern, that, excepting a few instances, which deserve the highest praise, no effectual means have yet been put in practice, either on the part of those individuals who are most nearly interested in the welfare of these poor wretches, or of the government under which they live, to rescue them out of this spiritual captivity, so much worse than even that temporal one (heavy as it is) to which they are condemned. Almost the only considerable attempts that have been made to deliver them from this deplorable state of ignorance have been made by this venerable Society; which has had this object, among others, constantly in view, and in the prosecution of it has not been sparing either of labour or expense.

* We are informed, on good authority, that the Negroes are allowed an *unlimited indulgence* in those vices which are expressly reprobated by the Christian doctrine. Long's *Hist. of Jamaica*, vol. ii. pp. 409. 414. 424.

But it must be owned that our endeavours have not hitherto been attended with the desired success. This, however, has been owing, not to what some are willing to suppose, an impossibility in the nature of the thing itself; not to any absolute incapacity in the Africans to receive or retain religious knowledge (a pretence contradicted by the best testimony, and by repeated experience,) but to *accidental*, and, I trust, *surmountable* causes; to the prejudices formerly entertained by many of the planters against the instruction and conversion of their slaves; to the want which the latter have experienced of sufficient time and opportunity for this purpose; to the abject, depressed, degraded, uncivilized, unbefriended, immoral state, in which the Negroes have been so long suffered to remain; to the very little attention paid to them on the part of government; to the almost total want of laws to protect and encourage them, and to soften, in some degree, the rigours of their condition *; to the

* The regulations that have been formerly made in the British West India islands, respecting the slaves, breathe a spirit of extreme severity and rigour. There are laws in abundance to *punish*, but scarce any to *protect* them. Even

necessity, in short, which the Society itself has hitherto been under of listening to other claims of a very pressing and important nature; and of employing a large share of its fund in disseminating religious knowledge, and providing for the maintenance of public worship in other parts of his majesty's dominions, where its assistance was much wanted, and most earnestly and repeatedly solicited.

These, I apprehend, are the principal obstacles which have hitherto retarded the general conversion of the Negroes. But what then are we to do? Are we utterly to abandon this great concern, to consider it as a desperate, impracticable, visionary project, to renounce all hopes of ever making any effectual progress in it, and, of course, to consign over several hundred thousands of our fellow-creatures to the grossest ignorance, irreligion, and heathenism for ever? It is impossible that any

---

the wilful murder of a Negro, from *wantonness* (as the law expresses it) and *bloody-mindedness*, is, in Barbadoes, punished only by a small pecuniary fine. Some undoubtedly meet with kind and indulgent masters, whose natural humanity stands in the place of laws: but in general it is to be feared they feel most sensibly the want of LEGAL PROTECTION.

such idea should ever enter into our minds. On the contrary, we shall certainly consider the failure of our former attempts as a strong and powerful call upon us to redouble our diligence and activity in this most laudable undertaking, and the impediments we have hitherto met with, far from extinguishing or abating our honest zeal, will on the contrary animate us with fresh ardour, and put us upon trying *new expedients* to surmount them. If such be our resolution, there are the strongest reasons to believe that our generous efforts will finally be crowned with success. There are at present several favourable circumstances, which may well inspire us with hopes of a more prosperous issue to our pious labours. Many excellent tracts have within these few years been published, both in this and other countries, on the subject of Negro Slavery; and a still more excellent one will, I hope, soon see the light *;

* Mr. Ramsay's *Essay on the Treatment of the Negro Slaves in the British West India Islands.* This was one of the first tracts on the subject which excited the attention of the Public; and contributed perhaps more than any other

all which can hardly fail by degrees to remove the prejudices (if any still remain) of the West Indian planters, and excite the attention of Government to this most important object; which must satisfy the former that it is not only their duty but their interest to consult a little more both the present comfort and the future salvation of their slaves: and must convince the latter that it highly becomes the wisdom of the provincial legislatures to give some countenance to the wretched Africans who are under their power, and to enact, as the French government has long since done, a

---

to the parliamentary inquiry into the nature of the slave trade, which a few years afterwards took place. With the author of it, Mr. Ramsay, I was well acquainted, having been for several years a near neighbour to him in Kent. And I think it an act of justice, due to his worth and his great exertions, to say, that he was a man of distinguished piety, integrity, humanity, and veracity. But his work raised up against him such a host of enemies, and such a torrent of obloquy and invective poured in upon him from every quarter, that he sunk under the storm which assailed him, and became, in some degree at least, a victim to the important contest in which he had so warmly engaged. It was, however a source of inexpressible comfort and satisfaction to him, in his last moments, that he had so strenuously exerted himself in such a cause.—FEB. 28. 1803.

CODE OF LAWS for their protection, their security, their encouragement, their improvement, and their conversion.* In fact, several of the most wealthy and most worthy proprietors of West India estates,

* The system of laws here alluded to is called the CODE NOIR, and was first published in the year 1685. That copy of it which I have seen, was printed at Paris in 12mo. 1767. It contains many admirable regulations respecting the diet, the clothing, the treatment, the government, the discipline, the morals, and the religion of the Negroes. Amongst other things it obliges every planter to have his Negroes baptized, and properly instructed in the doctrines and duties of Christianity. It allows the slaves for these purposes, and for days of rest, not only *every Sunday*, but *every festival usually observed by the Romish church*. It does not permit any *market* to be held on Sundays or holidays. It prohibits, under severe penalties, all masters and managers from corrupting their female slaves. It does not allow the Negro husband, wife, and infant children, to be sold separately. It obliges the owners to maintain their old, infirm, and decrepit slaves. It forbids them the use of torture, or of immoderate and inhuman punishments. If the Negroes are not fed and clothed as the laws prescribe, or if they are in any respect cruelly treated, they may apply to the *Procureur*, who is obliged by his office to protect and redress them. Such is the humane attention of the French nation to their slaves. Many excellent laws have also been made in favour of the Indians employed by the Spaniards in South America. And besides these, every district of Indians has a PROTECTOR; clergymen, paid by government, are appointed to instruct them; and the

resident as well in this country as in the Islands, have of late begun to see this matter in the right point of view. They have given repeated injunctions to their agents and managers both to mitigate the hardships and promote the instruction of their Negroes: and the planters in general are no longer alarmed with an imagination which was formerly entertained, that when their Negroes become Christians, they cease to be slaves; and that in proportion as they are more religious, they grow less faithful, active, and industrious. Add to this, that the last war, amidst a multitude of evils, such as war necessarily produces, has been attended with one accidental effect, which, whatever may be thought of it in a commercial view, I do not scruple, in a religious one, to call a blessing. It has very greatly impeded and diminished that opprobrious traffic, in which this country

---

principal ecclesiastics are empowered to inform and admonish the civil magistrates, if any Indians are deprived of their just rights. The Negroes live there not only in ease but in luxury. See *Robertson's History of America*, 1st edit. 4to. vol. ii. pp. 350. 368. 374. 377. 493.

has for a long time taken the lead, *the slave-trade on the coast of Africa.* The consequence of this has been, that several of the West India planters have been induced to treat their slaves, especially the females and their children, with more than ordinary tenderness and indulgence, in order to supply their want of Negroes by their own natural population.* Should this wise and humane practice become an established and universal custom, it would exceedingly facilitate the

* There can be little doubt but that this might easily be effected by proper care and attention; by granting particular privileges, rewards, and even freedom, to the mothers of large families; by allowing more ease and better nourishment to the Negroes; by impressing early and strongly upon their minds the belief and the practice of the Christian religion, which can alone restrain that unbounded and promiscuous commerce with their women, which (by the acknowledgment of the planters themselves) is the principal obstacle to their natural increase; and by a variety of other expedients which humanity and sound policy would naturally dictate. And although this might be attended perhaps at first with some trifling expense, and with some small abatement of present exertion; yet all this would be amply overpaid by the prodigious savings of what is usually expended in the purchase of fresh slaves, and by the great and acknowledged superiority of home-born Negroes to those imported from Africa. See *Long's History of Jamaica*, pp. 436, 437. 439.

work both of instruction and conversion, by furnishing a succession of young Negro catechumens, well acquainted with the English language, familiarized to the English customs, and uncorrupted by those heathenish principles and savage manners with which the constant importation of fresh slaves from Africa has never failed to infect them, and to obliterate in a few weeks all those sentiments of morality and religion which it had been the work of years to impress upon their minds.

These surely are considerations which afford the Society much fairer prospects of success than it has ever yet had. The harvest in this quarter promises to be much more plenteous than we have hitherto found it, and may well encourage us to bestow more of our attention upon it, and to send more labourers into it. Whenever this resolution is taken, we shall undoubtedly think it necessary and right to begin with the Negroes on our trust-estates in Barbadoes*; to try

* Certain lands in Barbadoes, bequeathed to the Society by General Coddrington *in trust* for particular uses specified in his will.

how far the work of conversion can actually be carried, to put in practice every possible expedient, first to civilize, and then to make them, what they undoubtedly may be made, not merely *nominal*, but *real* Christians. The Society has indeed always shown a most laudable solicitude both for the temporal and eternal welfare of the slaves employed on their plantations. They have given the most positive and peremptory orders to their managers to treat them with the utmost tenderness and humanity. They have appointed a catechist for the sole purpose of instructing them in the doctrines and duties of Christianity. They have taken care that their Negroes shall be regularly summoned to divine worship, and enjoy, without interruption, the sacred rest they are entitled to on the Lord's day. For this purpose they have allowed them for their own use the afternoon also of the preceding day; and their journals are full of the strongest and most earnest injunctions to their catechist to exert his utmost zeal in impressing a right sense of religion on the minds of their slaves; a point which the Society declare in their

letters that *it is impossible for them ever to give up.** These, it must be owned, are wise and truly Christian regulations, and highly suitable to the character of this venerable Society. But it is greatly to be doubted whether these directions have always been punctually complied with in the degree and to the extent proposed; or if they have, there is but too much reason to fear, that they have by no means fully answered the good intentions of the Society. The truth is, these are *excellent beginnings*, but they are *only* beginnings of an effectual and vital conversion of the Negroes. A foundation is laid, but it must be laid, I apprehend, still broader and deeper, before it will bear a superstructure of sufficient strength and solidity, "and so fitly "framed together as to grow into a holy tem-"ple unto the Lord, and a permanent habit-"ation of God through the Spirit."† It is, in short, the clear and decided opinion of every man who has considered the subject thoroughly, and has had opportunities of observing and studying, for a long course of years, the temper, the disposition, the man-

* See the Society's Journals, 1769. † Ephes. ii. 21, 22.

ners, the capacities, the treatment, and the condition of our Negro slaves, that in their present state of debasement and degradation, sunk as they are below the level of the human species; treated merely as animals doomed to labour; cut off almost entirely from the protection of the state, and the advantages of social life, with scarce any substantial comforts and indulgences to cheer their spirits, to excite their ambition, to encourage their hopes, they are hardly capable of receiving any deep and lasting impressions of religion. In fact, a certain degree of improvement and civilization has been always found necessary to prepare the mind for the admission of the divine truths of Revelation: and, unless the soil is a little tilled and dressed, and meliorated by a proper course of cultivation, the good seed will scarce ever strike root in it, or at least take such firm hold upon it as to spring up with health and vigour, and "bring forth fruit to perfection." If ever then we hope to make any considerable progress in our benevolent purpose of communicating to our Negroes the benefits and the blessings of religion, we must first give

them some of the benefits and the blessings of society and of civilized government. We must, as far as is possible, attach them and their families inseparably to the soil; must give them a little interest in it; must indulge them with a few rights and privileges to be anxious for; must secure them by fixed laws from injury and insult; must inform their minds, correct their morals, accustom them to the restraints of legal marriage, to the care of a family, and the comforts of domestic life; must improve and advance their condition gradually, *as they are able to bear it*; and even allow a certain number of the most deserving to work out their freedom by degrees (according to the plan said to be established in some of the Spanish settlements) as a reward of superior merit and industry, and of an uncommon progress in the knowledge and the practice of Christianity.*

* The Spanish regulation here alluded to, is said to have taken place at the Havannah; and is as follows. As soon as the slave is landed, his name, price, &c. are entered in a public register; and the master is obliged by law to allow him one working day in every week to himself, besides Sunday; so that if he chooses to work for his master on that day, he receives the wages of a free-man

All this may be done, as they who are best acquainted with the subject have asserted, and I think proved, without the smallest injury to the rights, the property, or the emoluments of the planter; and were a plan of this nature introduced first into the society's estates, there is every reason in the world to

---

for it; and whatever he gains by his labour on that day is so secured to him by law, that the master cannot deprive him of it. As soon as the slave is able to purchase another working day, the master is obliged to sell it to him at a proportionable price, viz. one-fifth part of his original cost; and so likewise the remaining four days, at the same rate, as soon as the slave is able to redeem them: after which he is absolutely free.—See *Mr. Sharpe's Appendix to the Just Limitation of Slavery* &c. p. 53.

There is something wonderfully pleasing and benevolent in this institution. It were greatly to be wished that some expedient of this kind might be *tried*, at least as an experiment, in some of the English islands. It is believed (on very just grounds, and after the maturest consideration of the subject) by men of great judgment and long experience in the management of West India estates, that if the Negroes on any of our plantations were emancipated *gradually* (for every improvement of their situation must be *very gradual*) in some such way as is here proposed, and retained afterwards by their owners as day-labourers at a certain fair stipulated price, it would be an alteration no less advantageous to the planter than kind and compassionate to the Negro.

expect from it the most beneficial consequences, not only in a religious, but even in a lucrative view. In the present situation indeed of those estates, it cannot well be attempted. The embarrassments in which, by a series of the most unfortunate incidents, they have for some time past been involved, have rendered it necessary for the Society to part with the management of them for a few years out of their own hands, which will render it unadvisable, and indeed impracticable, to establish for the present, in their full extent, the regulations now proposed. Yet still if any thing here suggested should seem to deserve the Society's attention, they may at least allow it to have some share in their deliberations; they may be forming, digesting, and arranging their future measures with a view to this great object, and be gradually, preparing the way for the complete execution of them *at a proper time*; in which there can be no doubt but they will have the hearty concurrence and assistance of that worthy and benevolent member of the Society, to whom they have for the present consigned their West Indian property.

With regard to our missionaries in North America, in what state they will remain after the great change which has so recently taken place on that continent, is as yet unknown; and therefore at present nothing more can with propriety be said concerning them than this: that the interests of the Church of England in America will never be willingly abandoned by this Society; and that we shall ever retain, and, as far as we are able, give the most substantial proofs that we *do* entertain, a just and deep sense of the merits of those excellent persons among our missionaries, who, amidst the dangers and distresses of war, have preserved their fidelity unshaken, and through a long course of the severest trials have persevered uniformly and steadily in the discharge of their duty to their country, to the Society, and to the several congregations entrusted to their care.

But there is still another point which calls at present for some part of our attention; I mean the English Protestants in the province of Canada. They are now said to amount to several thousands, settled in different parts of the country, and at con-

siderable distances from each other. For the instruction of all these there are no more than three Protestant clergymen, and those all foreigners, appointed and paid by Government. There is not in the whole province a single English clergyman of our own communion, nor is there a single church belonging to the Protestants, they being obliged to make use of the Romish chapels.

Every one must be sensible that such a provision as this, for the support of public worship among our Protestant brethren in Canada, is exceedingly inadequate to their wants, and loudly calls for some addition and improvement. One should naturally hope that Government itself would, on a proper representation of the case, extend its protection and assistance to so many deserving subjects, and increase the establishment of Protestant ministers in proportion to the great increase of Protestant inhabitants: to which probably there will now be very considerable accessions from the other American provinces. In the meanwhile this Society will perhaps think it necessary to pay some regard to those parts of Canada, where the English Protestants are most

destitute of proper religious instruction, and most remote from all opportunities of joining in that mode of public worship which is conformable to their religious sentiments.

Every exertion, however, that the Society may think fit to make in these respects, will be perfectly consistent with that great and necessary work which has been recommended in this discourse. The proper period for carrying *the whole of it* into execution must undoubtedly, for the reasons already assigned, be at some distance; but the first steps towards it may certainly be taken without delay. We may, at least, inquire more exactly into the effects produced by the labours of our Catechist on our own Negroes. We may send, if it should appear necessary, fresh instructions to him, and may appoint missionaries to such of the plantations as are willing to receive them. From these beginnings we may advance by degrees towards the completion of our design, till our plantation become (what I trust it will one day be) a MODEL for all the West India islands to imitate: till it exhibit to the world a spectacle no less singular in

its kind, than honourable to us and our religion, a little society of *truly Christian* Negroes, impressed with a just sense, and living in the habitual practice, of the several duties they owe to God, to their masters, to their fellow-labourers, and themselves; governed by *fixed laws*, and by the exactest discipline, yet tempered with gentleness and humanity; enjoying some little share of the comforts and advantages of social and domestic life; seeing their children educated in the principles of morality and religion; performing their daily tasks with alacrity and fidelity; looking up to their masters, as their friends, their protectors, and benefactors; and consoling themselves for the loss of their liberty and their native land, by the care taken to "make their yoke easy and their burthen light," to civilize their manners, to enlarge their understandings, to reform their hearts, and to open to them a prospect into a better and a happier country, where all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and where sorrow and *slavery* shall be no more.

A scene such as this, which is far, I am persuaded, from being a visionary idea, would

be delightful to humanity; would form A NEW SCHOOL FOR PIETY AND VIRTUE IN THE WESTERN WORLD, a seminary of religion for all the slaves of the neighbouring plantations and islands, perhaps ultimately for the whole coast of Africa; would be an example of decency, of order, of harmony, of industry, of happiness, which the other planters would find it impossible to resist; and would more effectually confute the various objections that have been made to the conversion of the African slaves, than all the speculative arguments in the world. *

* Every thing here proposed, with respect to the Negroes belonging to the Society's estate in Barbadoes, might be effected without difficulty, if a missionary *well qualified* for the business was sent there, with a good appointment, for the *sole purpose* of instructing the slaves in the principles of morality and religion.

And that a *general* conversion of the Negroes to Christianity is no visionary or romantic project, but perfectly practicable, and that it would be in the highest degree beneficial, both to the Negroes themselves and to their proprietors, by improving their morals, andpromoting their increase, by rendering them more content with their situations, more diligent in their labours, more attached to their masters, is evident from the report made on the subject to the committee of privy-council (which sat in the year 1788 to examine evi-

And let us not be deterred from this noble undertaking by the apprehension of that ad-

---

dence on the slave trade, and at which I constantly assisted) by the governors and legislators of almost all our West India islands. And it is further confirmed beyond a doubt, by *actual experience*, by the astonishing success which has attended the labours of the Moravian missionaries in the Danish islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John, and more particularly in the island of Antigua, where there are now near 10,000 Negroes under their direction, who are not only baptized, but carefully instructed in the doctrines and duties of revealed religion, and are not merely nominal but real christians. And so much do their converts exceed all the unconverted slaves in sobriety, industry, honesty, fidelity, and obedience to their masters, that all the planters in that island are anxious to have their Negroes placed under their care. A very satisfactory statement of these important and decisive facts may be found in a paper sent from Antigua, and inserted in the very valuable report of the committee of privy council above mentioned.

In the speech made by Mr. Charles Ellis in the House of Commons, on his moving for a gradual termination of the slave-trade, in the year 1797, that gentleman strongly recommends a general plan for the instruction of the Negro slaves in the principles of morality and religion; and in consequence of his motion being adopted by the House, directions were actually sent by the Secretary of State to the governors of the West India islands, to promote in the most effectual manner the moral and religious instruction of the Negroes. But I have not yet heard that any effectual measures have hitherto been taken for that purpose. March 10, 1803.

ditional expense in which it may involve us. The demands upon us from other quarters, where we have formerly expended considerable sums, will probably be continually growing less and less; the expenses incurred on account of our West Indian estates are now in a train of being gradually repaid, and even the savings from the missions now vacant in America (should it be found impracticable or unadvisable to re-establish them) would be more than sufficient to answer all the purposes of the proposed undertaking. But should it even require more than our revenues can supply, we need be under no apprehension of wanting proper support. When once it is known that the civilization and the conversion of the Negro slaves is to be hereafter one of the grand leading objects of our pious labours, and a proper and practicable plan for that purpose is laid before the public, every heart, every hand, will be open on the occasion; and there cannot be a doubt but that the increase of our benefactions and subscriptions will soon gratify our most sanguine wishes. It is impossible that the generosity, the humanity, I will add, the

justice, of the English nation, can suffer *near half a million* of their fellow-creatures to continue in the most deplorable state of heathenism, irreligion, and vice, without giving the Society every assistance that may be necessary to extricate them out of it. It would be glorious to Great Britain to take the lead in this benevolent and truly Christian enterprise. And allow me to add, that it is peculiarly incumbent on the people of this kingdom to exert their utmost liberality in alleviating the miseries, both temporal and spiritual, of the wretched Africans; since they have been for many years (till interrupted by the late war) more largely concerned in that inhuman merchandise of men, and have imported more slaves into the colonies than any other nation in Europe. By their means principally have many thousands, many millions, of human creatures, been torn from their native land, from every blessing that was valuable, every connection that was dear to them; and, after passing in their voyage through incredible hardships and difficulties, (under which great numbers of them actually

perish) * have been landed in a country and among a people unknown to them; and, without any offence or fault of theirs, have been doomed to a perpetual servitude, a servitude too which they leave (the only inheritance they have to leave) entailed on their latest posterity. †

Let then our countrymen make haste to relieve, as far as they are able, the calamities they have brought on so large a part of the human race; let them endeavour to wipe away the reproach of having delivered over

* In the passage, and in what is called *the seasoning* in the islands, one-third of the new-imported Negroes is sometimes lost. *Long's Hist of Jamaica*, vol. ii. p. 434, and Benezet's *Caution*, &c. p. 40. In a late trial at Guildhall it appeared, that a ship, freighted with slaves, being reduced to a great scarcity of water, 133 *Negroes were hand-cuffed, and thrown into the sea!*

In the year 1768, the number of slaves bought on the coast of Africa was 104,100. Of these 53,100 were bought by British merchants. The constant annual importation, and of course *the annual-consumption*, of Negroes in America and the West Indies is supposed to have been, of late years, on an average, about 60,000. The Abbé Raynal states the total importation from Africa, since the first beginning of the slave-trade, at *nine millions of slaves. Hist. Phil.* vol. iv. p. 154. Surely it deserves consideration *again and again*, whether this cruel havoc might not be prevented, *without*

so many of their innocent fellow-creatures to a most heavy temporal bondage, both by contributing to soothe and alleviate that as much as possible, and by endeavouring to rescue them from the still more cruel bondage of ignorance and sin. Let them, in short, concur with the generous efforts of the Society, "to heal the *broken-hearted*, to "preach deliverance to the *captives*, and re-"covering of sight to the *blind*, to set at "liberty them that are *bruised*, to preach "the acceptable year of the Lord."

---

any injury to the islands, by some one of the methods above suggested; either by trying to cultivate the sugar-cane by enfranchised blacks, or by the abolition of the slave-trade at a certain distant period, or by giving such encouragement to the population of the Negroes in our islands, as might render their increase equal to the demand of the plantations, and preclude the necessity of any further importation from Africa.

APPENDIX TO SERMON XVII.

THAT the slave-trade to the coast of Africa might without any material injury to our islands be abolished by one of the methods mentioned in the last note to the preceding sermon, p. 421, has been repeatedly, and I think very satisfactorily proved. The attempts, however, that have been made to carry into effect any mode of abolition, have for the present failed, and the question is now probably at rest for many years. But although the main object of this great and memorable contest has been unfortunately lost, and the efforts of those truly great men, who, to their immortal honour, contended for the extinction of this odious traffic, have not been attended with that complete success which might have been expected from the justice of their cause, the weight of their arguments, the splendour of their talents, and the unrivalled power of their eloquence, yet still many important advantages have incidently arisen from the agitation of the question, and the cause of

humanity has upon the whole been a considerable gainer by the conflict.

In the first place, many excellent regulations have been made respecting the vessels in which the Negroes are conveyed from Africa to the West Indies, and the mode of treating them during their voyage; which have contributed most essentially to the preservation of their lives, and to the alleviation of the extreme misery they formerly endured in passing from one country to the other.

2. Since the discussion of this question, the condition of the Negro slaves in the British West India islands has been considerably meliorated. A much greater degree of lenity and gentleness has been exercised towards them, by the greater part of the West India proprietors, than is said to have generally prevailed in the islands twenty years ago. Their ease and comfort have in several instances been very humanely consulted, and some very salutary laws have been enacted for their protection, and security, especially in the islands of Jamaica and Grenada.

3. Another most important advantage, resulting from this contest, is that in the course of it, the nature of the slave-trade to the coast of Africa has been fully laid open to the world; all its horrors have been dragged forth to public view, and the grand point in dispute, on which the controversy chiefly turned, and the truth of which was for a long time most strenuously denied by the opposers of the abolition, I mean the injustice, the inhumanity, and the immorality of that trade, has been at length given up, even by several of the West India proprietors themselves, and those too of the most respectable characters and talents.

I appeal, in the first place, to the full, explicit, and honourable confession of the late Mr. Bryan Edwards, (the celebrated historian of the West Indies, and an enemy to the abolition of the slave-trade,) in his speech delivered at a free conference between the council and assembly of the island of Jamaica, on the 19th of November 1789. The passage I allude to is as follows:

"I am persuaded that Mr. Wilberforce has been very rightly informed, as to the

manner in which slaves are generally procured. The intelligence I have collected from my own Negroes abundantly confirm Mr. Wilberforce's account; and I have not the smallest doubt that in Africa the effects of this trade are precisely such as he represents them to be. Sir, the whole or greatest part of that immense continent is a field of warfare, and desolation; a wilderness in which the inhabitants are wolves toward each other. That this scene of oppression, fraud, treachery, and blood, if not originally occasioned, is in part (I will not say wholly) upheld by the slave-trade, I dare not dispute. Every man in the sugar-islands may be convinced that it is so, who will inquire of any African Negroes, on their first arrival, concerning the circumstances of their captivity. The assertion, that a great many of them are criminals and convicts, is a mockery and insult; nor can any thing be more fallacious than a comparative reference to the number of felons transported annually from England." *Mr. Edwards's speech at a Free Conference, &c.*——p. 10.

In the next place, I appeal to the motion made by Mr. Charles Ellis, in the house of commons, April 6, 1797, for adopting such measures as might gradually diminish the necessity of the slave-trade, and ultimately lead to its complete termination; which motion (as we are informed by one of the speakers in that debate) was much to their honour, made at the general and almost unanimous desire of the whole West Indian body in the house of commons, after many and deep consultations. *

In the debate on this motion, Mr. Ellis candidly confesses that the slave-trade could not be considered in any other light than as a *necessary evil* †; and that if the question were changed to a deliberation, whether a system should or should not now be established, which must depend for its future existence on a trade in slaves, the discussion might then be confined to the *merits* of such a trade; and arguing simply on that principle, it would be impossible for any man of *common humanity* to hesitate

* Mr. Barham's speech, p. 56.

† Mr. Ellis's speech, p. 38.

in foregoing whatever advantages might be expected from such a system. *

It appears then from this speech of Mr. Ellis, and still more from that of Mr. Edwards, that the *merits* of the trade are completely abandoned, and the propriety of putting a termination to it admitted. The question is, therefore, now brought into a very narrow compass, and reduced to this single point; what is the best, and safest, and most effectual mode of removing this dreadful scourge of so large a part of the human race? This will be the sole subject of consideration, if ever this great question shall be again resumed; and when all the ability and wisdom of the two houses of parliament are directed to this single point now at issue, we may reasonably flatter ourselves that the decision of it will not meet with much difficulty or much delay.

* Mr. Ellis's speech, p. 2.

SERMON XVIII.

JOHN xiii. 23.

NOW THERE WAS LEANING ON JESUS' BOSOM ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES, WHOM JESUS LOVED.

THE person here described, is St. John the Evangelist, the author of that Gospel which bears his name, and from which the text is taken. It was he who enjoyed the honourable distinction of being placed next to his divine Master, and of leaning on his bosom at supper. He was, moreover, always one of those whom our lord admitted to his most confidential conversations and most interesting transactions, especially in the last awful and affecting scenes of his life; and he is scarce ever mentioned by any other

name than that of THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED.* These circumstances plainly mark the favourite and the friend: and, on the other hand, if we advert a little to the conduct of St. John towards our Lord during the course of his sufferings, the very time when true friendship would be most apt to show itself, we shall discover in it plain indications of a strong and tender affection.

When our Saviour was betrayed by Judas, and apprehended by the Jews, though St. John had at first, with all the other disciples, forsaken him and fled; yet his affection soon got the better of his fears, and prompted him to follow his Lord, at the utmost hazard of his own life, into the palace of the high priest. † St. Peter did the same, but in a very short time afterwards, exhibited a melancholy instance of human infirmity, and, notwithstanding the most vehement and passionate professions of inviolable attachment to Jesus, he denied him three times with execrations and oaths. St. John's way of manifesting his sincerity was not by words, but by

* John xiii. 23; xix. 26; xx. 2.; xxi. 7. 20.

† See Le Clerc, Doddridge, and other commentators on John xviii. 15, 16.

deeds. He faithfully adhered to his divine Master in the very midst of his enemies, and with fond anxiety pursued him through all the various events of this distressful period of his life. After Jesus was condemned and hung upon the cross, casting his eyes down from that dreadful eminence, he saw among the crowd the "disciple whom he loved "standing by." * It does not appear from the history that there were any other of the apostles that attended him in this last melancholy scene, except St. John. They were terrified, it should seem, with the danger of openly espousing him at so critical a time. But, unawed by any such apprehensions, which all gave way to the ardour of his friendship, and the extremity of his grief, our evangelist placed himself as near as he could to the cross, to catch the dying looks, and to wait the last commands of his Lord and friend. Those commands were soon given him, in the most affecting terms; and the trust then reposed in him was of such a nature as plainly showed what unbounded confidence his dying Master placed in his fidelity

* John xix. 26.

ever reads them with attention will discover in them plain indications not only of a heaven-directed hand, but of a feeling and a grateful heart, smitten with the love of a departed friend, penetrated with a sense of his distinguished kindness, perfectly well informed, and thoroughly interested, in every tender scene that it describes, soothing itself with the recollection of little domestic incidents and familiar conversations, and tracing out not only the larger and more obvious features of the favourite character, but even those finer and more delicate strokes in it which would have eluded a less observing eye, or less faithful memory, than those of a beloved companion and friend.

From this short detail it appears, that there subsisted between our Saviour and St. John a real, sincere, and tender friendship; and this fact being established, will furnish us with some remarks, of no small importance to religion and to ourselves.

The first is, that friendship is perfectly consistent with the spirit of the Gospel, and the practice of every duty that it requires at our hands. Who, indeed, but must grieve if

it was not? Who but would grieve to find, that, in order to arrive at happiness in the next world, it is necessary to renounce one of the greatest blessings that can be possessed in this? For although, indeed, both the merits and the pleasures of friendship have been sometimes, by ancient as well as modern writers, most extravagantly and injudiciously magnified; yet after all, it must be allowed, that when it is formed on right principles, and conducted with sobriety and good sense, there is something in it so soothing, so congenial to the human mind; it is what the very best of men have been always so strongly disposed to cultivate and cherish; it so improves every enjoyment, and so lightens every misfortune; it is associated generally with so many excellent qualities; it gives birth to so many generous sentiments, so many noble and disinterested actions; it is, in short, though not a virtue, yet something so *very like* a virtue, that no one who has ever tasted the genuine satisfaction it affords, can willingly consent to part with it. He cannot easily be brought to believe that a religion, which not only allows but improves and exalts every

innocent and rational enjoyment, should in this single instance assume a tone of rigour quite foreign to its natural temper, and preclude us from one of the sweetest consolations that has ever yet been found out for the various afflictions of life. And in fact there is no need for any such apprehensions. The example of our Lord himself is alone sufficient to satisfy us on this head. If *He* had his beloved companion and friend, we cannot surely be acting contrary to his sentiments, if we also have ours.

But whence then, it is said, that remarkable *silence* of the Gospel on this subject? How comes it to pass, that on the article of friendship, which has so much exercised the eloquence of Pagan writers, not one syllable is to be found in the whole New Testament, not one precept or direction, not even the smallest degree of commendation bestowed upon it? The answer is obvious. To have made friendship a necessary part of Christian obedience would have been preposterous and absurd. For that similarity of disposition, and coincidence of sentiment and affection, on which friendship is founded, do not depend solely

on our own choice, are not under the direction of our own will; and therefore could not possibly be the proper objects of a divine command. Nor would it have been prudent to have expressed in the Gospel any particular approbation of this connection. It might have inflamed that propensity to it which nature had already made sufficiently strong, and which the injudicious encomiums of heathen moralists had raised to a romantic and a dangerous height. Our divine Lawgiver showed his wisdom equally in what he enjoined, and what he left unnoticed. He knew exactly, what no Pagan philosopher ever knew, where to be silent and where to speak. It was not his intention, it was indeed far below his dignity, to say fine things upon popular subjects; pleasing perhaps to a few, but utterly useless to the bulk of mankind. *His* object was of a much more important and extensive nature: to inculcate the plain, humble, practical duties of piety and morality; the duties that were of universal concern and indispensable obligation, such as were essentially necessary to our well-being in this life, and our everlasting happiness in the next. Now the warmest

admirers of friendship cannot pretend to raise it into *a duty*, much less into a duty of this high rank. It is a delightful, it is an amiable, it is often a laudable attachment; but it is not a necessary requisite either to the present welfare or the future salvation of mankind in general, and consequently is not of sufficient importance to deserve a distinct place in the Christian system. The utmost that could be done there was to show (and it was sufficiently shown by the example of our Lord) that a virtuous friendship does not militate against the *spirit* of his religion; but is, on the contrary, as we shall see presently, improved and exalted by its precepts, and finds in them its best foundation and its firmest support.

From the mere *silence* then of the Gospel on this subject, no inference can be justly drawn against the lawfulness of friendship. But it is urged further (and it is a circumstance which seems to have had much weight with some very ingenious defenders of revelation *) that it was one great object of the Christian religion to introduce into the world a temper of universal benevolence

* Particularly the late Mr. Soame Jenyns.

and good-will; and with that view its business was, not to *contract* but to expand our affections as much as possible; to throw down all the little mean fences and partitions, within which the human heart is too apt to intrench itself, and lay it open to nobler views, and a larger and more liberal sphere of action. Hence it is imagined, that friendship must necessarily be inconsistent with the genius of that religion, because it lavishes on one object all that kindness and affection which ought to be diffused among the whole human race. And, indeed, if friendship would be content with nothing less than the surrender of our whole stock of benevolence, without the least reserve for the rest of our fellow-creatures, it might well be deemed a monopoly altogether incompatible with that free and general commerce of good offices, which the Gospel certainly meant to extend to every quarter of the globe. But this surely is far from being a true state of the case. We may discharge every tender office that friendship can demand, without neglecting any of those social duties which Revelation enjoins. There are various gra-

dations of affection, corresponding to the various relations of life, all in perfect concord one with an other, and contributing each their respective parts towards the composition of that harmony which ought to reign throughout the whole. Connubial tenderness, filial affection, fraternal fondness, parental love, all these are *partial* attachments, no less than friendship, yet these most certainly the Gospel does not forbid. Why then should friendship be thought less reconcileable than these with the temper of our religion? The truth is, the design of Christianity was not to *extinguish*, but to *regulate* only, and reduce to their proper dimensions, all our private and personal connections. Within the wide circumference of Christian charity, it allows us to form as many smaller circles of benevolence as we please. It requires only that our affections should move in them under the control of that sovereign law of UNIVERSAL LOVE, which, like the great principle of ATTRACTION in the material world, is diffused throughout our moral system, to guide, direct, and regulate the whole, and to restrain within proper limits every subordinate sentiment and inferior

movement of the soul. Under these restrictions, so far is Christianity from being *adverse* to any virtuous connections, that it actually provides a remedy for the greatest imperfection under which they labour. It does, what in the fond hour of affection has been often wished, but, till the Gospel appeared, wished in vain; it renders our friendships *immortal.* It revives that union which death seems to dissolve; it restores us again to those whom we most dearly loved, in that blessed society of "just men made perfect," which is to form, probably, one great part of our felicity in heaven.

II. But, secondly; the example of our Lord, in selecting one beloved disciple, does not only give his sanction to friendship, but it teaches us also what *sort* of friendship it is that he allows and authorizes. For, whatever those qualities were which attracted his notice, and conciliated his affection, in the person of St. John, these, we may be sure, are the proper constituents of a legitimate, a Christian friendship. Now it does not appear that St. John was distinguished by any of these showy intellectual accomplishments

which are of all others most apt to strike our fancy and captivate our hearts, although, in fact, they are often much better calculated for the amusement of a convivial hour, than for that constant fund of comfort and satisfaction through life, which we naturally expect from a well-formed friendship. That which principally attracts our notice, in his writings, and in his conduct, is a simplicity and singleness of heart, a fervent piety, an unbounded benevolence, an unaffected modesty, humility, meekness, and gentleness of disposition. These are evidently the great characteristic virtues that took the lead in his soul, and break forth in every page of his Gospel and his epistles. These then are the qualities we ought principally to regard in the choice of our friends, and to cultivate in ourselves, if we would conciliate and preserve their affections. Now it is very observable, that these qualities are the very virtues which are properly styled *evangelical*, which the Christian revelation more peculiarly recommends, and which distinguish it from all other religions that ever appeared in the world. A friendship, therefore, founded on these prin-

ciples, is, strictly and properly speaking, *a Christian friendship*, and it will be the direct opposite of those celebrated instances of Pagan friendship, of which we hear so much in ancient story. The characteristics of these commonly were, a haughty and overbearing spirit; a vindictive, implacable, and impetuous temper; an intrepidity superior to every danger, and every consideration of justice, honesty, and humanity, in behalf of those partners in their iniquity whom they choose to call their friends. Such wild extravagancies as these, as well as those confederacies in vice, which young men, even now, sometimes compliment with the name of friendship, are indeed diametrically opposite to the genius of Christianity. But it would be as unfair to take our ideas of friendship from these corrupt perversions of it, as to form our notions of liberty from the excesses of a lawless rabble, or our sentiments of religion from the ravings of a delirious enthusiast. To know what friendship really is, we must look for it in that sacred repository of every thing great and excellent, the Gospel of Christ. We shall there not only see it actually existing in its utmost

perfection in the person of Christ and his beloved disciple; but we shall find that almost all the virtues on which his religion lays the greatest stress, have a natural tendency to generate it in our souls. Examine only the several branches of benevolence, as they lie in the sacred writings, and especially in that exquisite picture of charity which is drawn by the masterly hand of St. Paul *, and you will perceive that nothing is more easy than to graft upon them a firm and lasting friendship. They contain all the right principles and rudiments of that delightful sentiment; and these being once fairly laid before the world, every man was left (as it was fit he should be) to make the application of them himself, at his own discretion, to the purposes of friendly union, according as inclination led, or opportunity invited him. There can want nothing more than the concurrence of two congenial minds to kindle these sparks of friendship into a flame, much purer, I apprehend, and brighter, and more permanent, than ever glowed within the breast of a heathen.

From the whole then of this inquiry, it

* 1 Cor. xiii.

appears, that whoever cultivates the duties prescribed by the Gospel, will be of all others the best qualified for a virtuous friendship. But what is of far more consequence to the world in general, he will also be the best qualified to live happily without it. Friendship is a blessing which, like many others in this world, falls to the lot of few. It depends so much on constitution, on accident, on a concurrence of circumstances which so rarely meet, and which no one can command, that by far the greater part of mankind pass through the world, and pass through it very comfortably too, without ever having the good fortune to find that person whom they can with strict propriety call a *friend*. Had then the Gospel given ever so many precepts or directions on the subject of friendship, to a few refined philosophic minds, they might perhaps have been of some use. But it was not for these only, it was for the *multitude* also, for the people at large, that the Gospel was designed. And to these it must be no small satisfaction to find, that a connection which they often want the inclination, and oftener still the power, to

form, is not enjoined, is not recommended, is not even mentioned, in the Gospel, and that they may go to heaven extremely well without it. A faithful friend is indeed, as the son of Sirach no less justly than elegantly expresses it, *the medicine of life.* * And happy they are who find it. But to those who do not, or by any fatal accident are deprived of it, Christianity has other medicines, other consolations in store. It has pleasures to bestow, which will amply countervail those of the sincerest and firmest friendship. It gives that peace of mind, which nothing in this world, not even friendship itself, can give. It secures to us the favour of that Being who is able to be our friend indeed. Our earthly friends may deceive, may desert us, may be separated from us, may be converted into our bitterest enemies. But our heavenly Friend has declared (and he is one that may be trusted) that if we adhere faithfully to him he will never leave us nor forsake us. † It is, in short, in every man's power to be, if he pleases, though not precisely in the same sense that St. John was, yet in a very important

* Eccles. xi. 16. † Heb. xiii. 5.

sense, *the friend of Christ.* We have our Saviour's own word for it. "Ye are my "friends," says he to his disciples, "if ye "do whatsoever I command you." * Nay, he has assured us that he will consider every real Christian as united to him by still closer ties. This assurance is given us in one of those noble strains of divine eloquence which are so common in the sacred writings. Our Lord being told that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, he gives a turn to this little incident, perfectly new, and inexpressibly tender and affectionate. "Who "is my mother?" says he, "and who are "my brethren? And he stretched forth "his hand towards his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren. For "whosoever shall do the will of my Father "which is in heaven, the same is my bro-"ther, and sister, and mother." †

* John xv. 14. † Matt. xii. 46—50.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

Lately Published,

BY T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND,

The WORKS complete of BEILBY PORTEUS, D. D. Lord Bishop of London: With an account of his Life, by the Rev. ROBERT HODGSON, D. D. F. R. S. Dean of Carlisle. — Handsomely printed in 6 vols. 8vo. with a Portrait of his Lordship, from an original Picture. — Price £2 8*s.* in boards.

Each of the following may also be had separately.

I. SERMONS, 2 vols. 16th Edition. Price 16*s.* in boards.

II. LECTURES on St. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, 2 vols. 14th Edition. Price 16*s.* in boards.

III. A SUMMARY of the Principal Evidences for the Truth and Divine Origin of the CHRISTIAN REVELATION: Designed chiefly for the Use of young Persons, 12mo. 15th Edition. Price 3*s.* in boards.

IV. TRACTS on various Subjects, 8vo. 3d Edition. Price 9*s.* in boards.

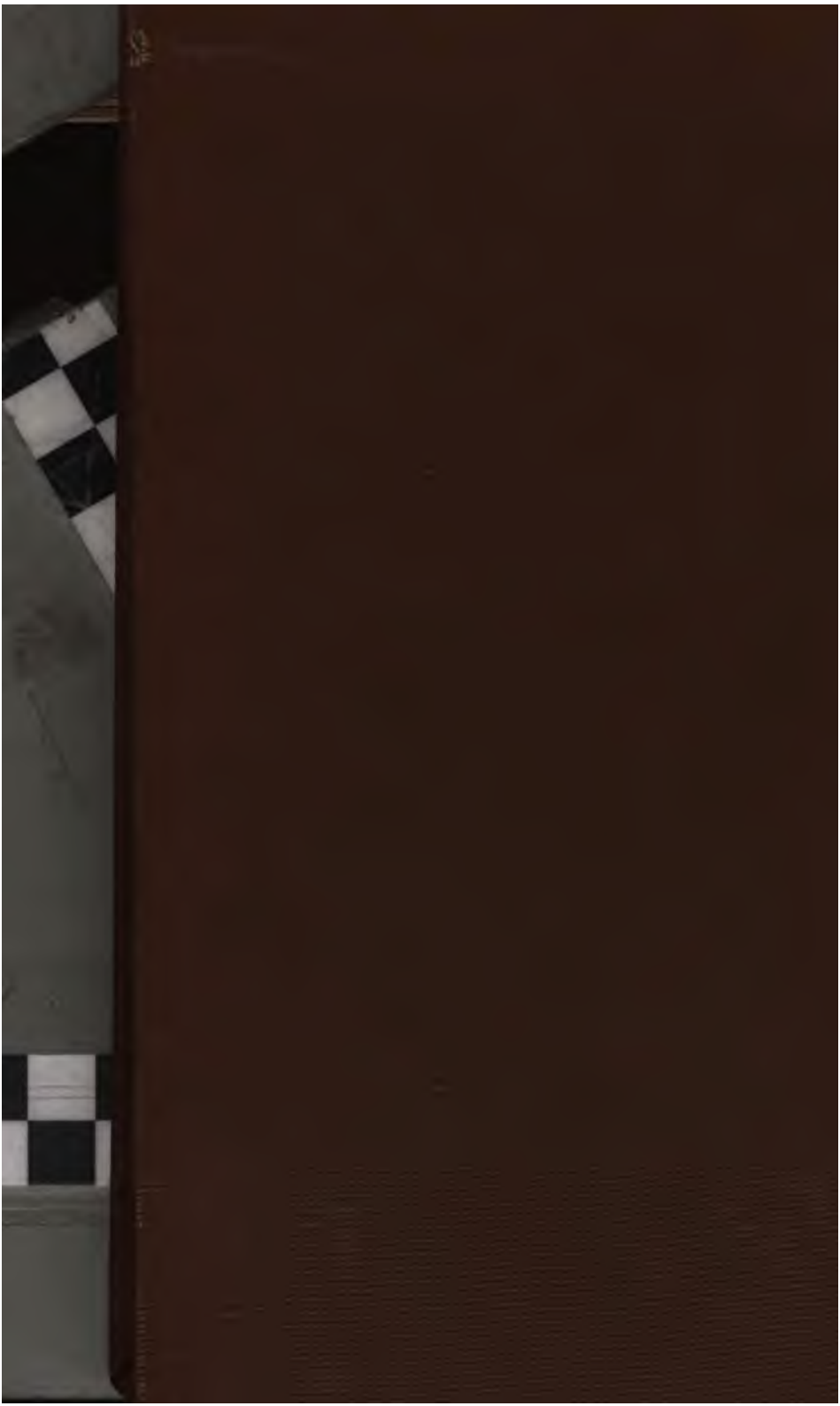
V. The LIFE of BISHOP PORTEUS, by the Rev. ROBERT HODGSON, A. M. 5th Edition. Price 7*s.* in boards.

Likewise, lately Published,

A full-length PORTRAIT of BEILBY PORTEUS, D. D. Lord Bishop of London, finely engraved by C. Picart from the approved original Drawing by H. Edridge. — Price £1 1*s.* A few Proofs, Price £1 11*s.* 6*d.*

AD

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

form 410